

Prairie Fire

May 22, 2009

In this issue:

- Calendar
- Programs
- RE news
- Rev. Ralph's
Ruminations
- Society News
- New Members
- Denominational
News

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

Contact Us:

Minister
Rev. Ralph Tyksinski
minister@uuprairie.org
873-6041

Youth Coordinator
Rebecca Malke-Eliganti
youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org
695-3435

Editor/Administrator
Kate Liu
admin@uuprairie.org
271-8218

President
Rachel Long
608-328-4899

Calendar

Saturday, May 23, 2009

8:00 am - noon, UU Blood Drive at First Society, walk-ins welcome.

Sunday, May 24, 2009

10:00 am - service - "Minding the Gaps in our Lives," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

11:45 am - Prairie Book Club meets to discuss Loving Frank.

Tuesday, May 26, 2009

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood. Topic is Major Life Lessons.

Sunday, May 31, 2009

10:00 am - service - "The Zen of Gardens and Gardening," presented by Mary Mullen.

11:30 am - Joint board meeting and potluck.

2:30 pm - Humanist Union picnic.

Sunday, June 7, 2009

10:00 am - service - "Found: Nuggets of Wisdom from District Assembly," presented by Prairie members.

Monday, June 8, 2009

6:30 pm - Spanish Speakers Potluck, at Prairie.

Tuesday, June 9, 2009

7:00 pm - Housing and Property committee meets at Prairie.

Saturday, June 13, 2009

9:00 am - WOW (Prairie Women's Group) meets at Prairie for breakfast potluck.

Sunday, June 14, 2009

10:00 am - service - "Flower Communion - Summer is Acomin'," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

Thursday, June 18, 2009

7:00 pm - Movie group meets to view "Everything is Illuminated."

Save the Date!

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

July 26, 2009 - Joint UU Service at Sauk City
October 23-25, 2009 - Prairie's Annual Family Retreat at Pine Lake Camp.

Upcoming Sunday Programs

Sunday May 24, 2009 "Minding the Gaps in Our Lives," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski. On this observed Memorial Day weekend our reflection will be on the expanded scope of Memorial Day. It is now a day on which we commemorate the "gaps", or "empty places" that all those, including family, friends, and loved ones who have died, leave in our lives. The central purpose of Memorial Day is captured in its name: Memorial Day is a day to remember.

Sunday, May 31, 2009 "The Zen of Gardens and Gardening – Prairie People Talk about the Spirituality of Gardening" - presented by Mary Mullen. If you expect to hear or sing "The Garden Song," a Prairie UU favorite, "The Zen of Gardens and Gardening" is not the service for you. Neither is it a service designed to convince you to save the world by turning your turf into a garden, to improve your family's health with home-grown organic vegetables, or to make you feel guilty for buying out-of-season produce from the factory farms of California. What is it then? This service will provide facts into how a number of us came to be gardeners or garden appreciators, insight into what keeps us going when our backs may ache and the bounty is too much, too much, too much, and a description or "picture" of what it is about gardens and gardening that sustains our souls – in short the Zen of gardening. There's likely to be a sprinkling of the literary as well. Whether or not you love gardens or gardening, expect to come away with a certain amount of sustenance for your soul. This service is being organized by Mary Mullen. If you want to contribute to it in any way, please contact her at <mmullen(at)chorus.net>.

Sunday, June 7, 2009 "Found: Nuggets of Wisdom from District Assembly," presented by Prairie Members. Prairie Society sent 6 people to the district assembly meeting, the annual meeting of the Central Midwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Come and hear what exciting things they learned at this meeting.

Sunday, June 14, 2009 "Flower Communion - Summer is Acomin' ," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski. In this service we will be celebrating the coming of Summer, vacations, warm weather, trips, and flowers. We ask that Prairie members bring flowers from their gardens to share with one another. We will be celebrating the Flower Ceremony, now called by many UU's the Flower Communion. It was first practiced by the congregation led by Rev. Dr. Norbert Capek, (and the grandfather of Prairie member, Lee Haspl) at the Unitarian church in Prague, Czechoslovakia, on June 4th, 1923. The symbolism of that original service was relatively straightforward and uncomplicated — we deposit our flowers in a common vessel to signify that we join of our own free will to create something beautiful which is greater than any of us could have created alone. At the close of the service, when we take back a flower different from the one we have brought, it symbolizes first that we accept one another, each for what we are; and likewise that as we give to the common store, so do we receive back from what we have created together. It is only by our individual participation that we are able to fill this vessel, so that all

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>

might enjoy and share of it. The words of the Hymns, as well as the Unison Prayers of Consecration, are Capek's own, and emphasize this theme of the Spirit of Fellowship and Beloved Community.

Sunday, June 21, 2009 "The Changing Landscape of Fatherhood," presented by a panel of Prairie fathers. Like mothers, fathers have a complicated role to play. They come to the "position" with the model of their own parent, but under changed conditions, perhaps changing social expectations, and their own personal intentions to do as well or better than their own fathers in raising their children. Several Prairie fathers will address the topics of interest to all of us. They'll talk about how their own fathering is the same or different from how their fathers interacted with them. Then they will address the challenges of fatherhood. Finally, they'll mention what they are hoping to instill in their children. We have chosen men with an eye to providing differing perspectives: fathers of boys, fathers of girls, and single fathers. Come and hear what these fathers have to say about "The Changing Landscape of Fatherhood."

Religious Education News



It's a Boy! Usually, our Youth Religious Education Coordinator (YREC) Rebecca Malke-Eligenti writes this column. I have the pleasure now of taking a turn because Rebecca is on maternity leave. Those of you who were at Prairie on the 17th for the Transitions Service got to see Rebecca and John and their handsome new little boy, **Kiran**, born Wednesday, May 6th, 7 pounds, 8 ounces and 19 inches long). We are happy to welcome him, and wish the whole family well.

Rebecca's Resting (or Trying to) Rebecca has her hands full (literally), so if you have questions or comments regarding the RE program, please address them to me and/or Robin Proud, who will be officially taking over the position of Chair of the RE Committee on May 31. Rebecca will be easing back into her responsibilities at Prairie as she feels able in the weeks and months to come, so Robin and I will keep her informed of what's going on.

Summer Help Wanted With Rebecca on leave and Sunday RE classes finished for the year, we need volunteers on Sunday mornings for our very low-key summer activities. We will have either Xena or Isha to look after the babies each Sunday, but we need volunteers to spend time with the older children. Please sign up to take a turn with our young people! We have games and craft supplies and books on hand. They love to cook and make things and just play together. Trips to the park are another possibility. If you feel uneasy about volunteering solo, find an adult buddy and do it together! I would also like to have a volunteer on hand each week to greet visiting families, show them the downstairs, and tell them a little about our RE program. Here are the dates when we need volunteers: May 24 & 31; June 7, 14, & 21; July 5 & 12; and August 2, 9, 23, & 30.

Not too Late to be a Teacher in 09/10 Openings are few, but you can still reserve one of these volunteer gigs:

Co-Teacher with Marcia Johnson for grades 1-3

Co-Teacher with Robin Proud for grades 4-6

Co-Teacher with Dan Proud for grades 7-8

With two teachers for each classroom, none of our teachers need to be downstairs every week. The curriculum theme next year is Our UU Principles and Heritage. (If you don't feel "qualified" to teach this topic, remember that the best way to learn about something is to prepare to teach about it.) Let us know if you'd like to look at the curriculum or get more information.

Prairie Kids Made the World a Better Place this year by raising money for many causes, including UNICEF, Heifer International, and the National Wildlife Fund. They also had a food drive for the pantry at Centro Guadalupe, worked at the Allied Drive food pantry, raked leaves for Prairie neighbors who needed help, and cleaned up the neighborhood. They even took time during Nifty Gifty to make holiday treats for kids living in shelters. This great bunch of young people loves to jump in and make a difference!

Karen Deaton

RE Committee Chair

karendeaton(at)[tds.net](mailto:karendeaton@tds.net)

608-278-8480

Hats off to Karen and Rebecca for a great RE year

I'd like to thank Karen for her two years of service as the RE chair, and to thank both Karen and Rebecca for putting together a wonderful social justice curriculum for this year. Your dedication, time, and energy, are much appreciated.

Robin Proud

Incoming RE Chair

Our Society

Prairie Elders Meets Tuesday, May 26

Prairie Elders meets Tuesday, May 26, 2:00-4:00 pm in the Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks building, Oakwood Village West. Informal conversation at 1:30. Newcomers are welcome. Call contacts below for directions or a ride.

MAY TOPIC: Major lessons learned from life. Sure, we all learned to eat with a fork and not to put our finger on a hot stove. But what major lessons did you learn from experiences unique to you? Such personal topics bring amazing tales from our over-sixty-five bunch. This promises to be a fascinating afternoon.

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 your own beverage cup and a few snacks to pass.

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.

Prairie Women's Group

Prairie's women's group, known as WOW, will be meeting Saturday, June 13th, at 9am for a potluck breakfast and conversation. We will meet at Prairie.

Prairie Film Group Resumes

June 18, 7:00 - Movie group meets to view *Everything is Illuminated*, "A young American Jewish man begins an exhausting quest -- aided by a naïve Ukrainian translator -- to find the righteous gentile woman who saved his grandfather when his small Ukrainian village (along with most of the populace) was obliterated during the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941. Stars Elijah Wood, Eugene Hutz and Boris Leskin. Liev Schreiber directs. Based on the novel by Jonathan Safran Foer." Please bring snacks to share.

Housing and Property News

Housing & Property Committee meeting at Prairie, Tuesday, June 9th, at 7pm. Agenda: Plan for project to paint and replace floor tiles in the basement; develop plans for Green Congregation projects energy conservation and study of photovoltaic systems; and, identify immediate maintenance needs.

Prairie Book Club Announces New Spring Book Selections

Everyone is invited to read the books selected by the Prairie Book Club and attend its discussions. This is an open book club that meets once a month at Prairie after a Sunday service. Participants bring food to share to the Sunday meetings which begin about 11:45 and continue until 1:00 or 1:30 p.m. Even if you haven't read the book but want to hear the discussion, you are welcome to attend. For more information or to be put on the e-mail list: Mary Mullen, mmullen@chorus.net, 608-298-0843.

For Sunday, May 24, the selection is [Loving Frank](#), by Nancy Horan. This novel is based on the affair between Mamah Borthwick Cheney and architect Frank Lloyd Wright and is focused on her life more than his. They met when he was engaged to design and build a house for the Cheneys in Oak Park, IL. A theme is early 20th Century feminism. The publisher's blurb: "Drawing on years of research, Horan weaves little-known facts into a compelling narrative, vividly portraying the conflicts and struggles of a woman forced to choose between the roles of mother, wife, lover, and intellectual. Horan's Mamah is a woman seeking to find her own place, her own creative calling in the world, and her unforgettable journey, marked by choices that reshape her notions of love and responsibility, leads inexorably to this novel's stunning conclusion." About the author: Nancy Drew Horan is a writer and journalist whose work has appeared in numerous publications. [Loving Frank](#) is her first novel. She lives in Oak Park, Illinois, with her husband and two teenage sons. For reviews of this book, http://www.litlovers.com/guide_lovgfrank.html & http://www.litlovers.com/guide_lovgfrank.html

For Sunday, June 21, the selection is [Nickel and Dime](#), by Barbara Ehrenreich. Learn what it is like to be a minimum-wage worker. The author lived the life for a few months, taking several different kinds of low-wage jobs including waitressing, working for a house-cleaning firm, and employment at Wal-Mart. You won't be able to put this book down, and you will have a lot more respect for these workers when you finish.

Choir Season Ends

The Prairie choir is officially on its summer rest, after a performance of "Immortal Love" on May 10th. Thanks go to Barb Park, director, and Doleta Chapru, accompanist, for a great season. Thanks also go to Dan Proud for "guest conducting" while Barb was recovering from surgery. Watch your Prairie News and Prairie Fire for when the choir will begin again in the fall.

Prairie Fire Survey Results

A big thank you to all the parish meeting attendees who took the time to give feedback about the changes in the Prairie Fire format and style. The big winner was the change in frequency to alternating long and short newsletters, with 78% liking it, 12% neutral, and 9% not liking it. Those who would rather see a return to long newsletters every 2 weeks cited the difficulty of making timely articles just once a month. Style changes were more contentious: 45% of respondents are happy with the new style, 32% are neutral, 16% would like to see the return of the former style, and 6% would like to see something else entirely. One of the comments most often received was missing pictures - and I will try to make an effort in future editions to include more photographs. (Technical difficulties prevented there being photos in this edition.) Several also commented that they missed the Prairie Smoke logo, so I will also make an effort to incorporate it again.

The same features people enjoyed in the last survey topped the charts again, with the calendar and program descriptions being the most used, but new member profiles saw a surge of interest. So, if you are a new member who has not given a profile yet, please do! People really do want to hear about you! A suggestion for a new feature included doing profiles on "older" members as well as new members, to give everyone a chance to learn about Prairie's interesting people. Do I have any volunteers?

People are still reading and using their Prairie Fires, though several commented they would read it more in hard copy. The sense I got was the grudging acceptance of the more finance-friendly and environmentally-friendly practice of electronic copies, but the longing for the return of the "paper in hand" reading experience. I'm with you there, believe me.

Satisfaction with the Prairie Fire remains high overall, with 89% of respondents stating their satisfaction as either high or very high. The lowest grade it received was fair, with the comment that the frequency change made for the reduced satisfaction. It's a pleasure to produce this newsletter for you, and please do speak up if there are things you would like to see in it.

Kate Liu

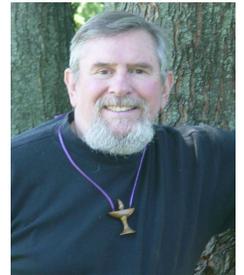
Prairie Administrator and Prairie Fire Editor
admin@uuprairie.org

Hospitality & Membership News

New Prairie Society Directories almost ready! Your administrator has the new directories almost ready for distribution. Printed copies need to be assembled and bound, and electronic copies need to be turned into pdfs for distribution through Prairie News. If you would like to reserve a printed copy, or have one mailed to you, please let Kate know by sending an email (admin@uuprairie.org,) or calling and leaving a message (271-8218.) Let me know if you would like a regular or large print version.

Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

It may be an aphorism that "time flies when you're having fun!", but in my view the three years time that I have been serving as Consulting Minister with and for Prairie UU Society has seemed like the flight of our space shuttle Atlantis now orbiting the Earth. (17,000 mph!) As our time together has "whoosed" by I thought it would be helpful for me to share the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association Introduction section on Ministry in the Association's 30 page document: **Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry** (revised 2008). My thought here is that it might serve as a preparation piece for the congregation to consider as it begins deliberations this coming year (2009-2010) on whether to engage in the corporate act of calling a minister. It is one of the Focus Areas the Board has identified for me to pursue as we move forward into the Summer and Fall months.



THE MINISTRY: AN INTRODUCTION

Members of our congregations have freely gathered to become a body of people seeking to find and to walk together in ways of truth and affection. Members have gathered in freedom to worship; to teach, encourage and support one another; and to speak to the world in words and actions of right, beauty, peace and goodwill.

To seek and to accept ordination to our ministry is to dedicate one's life to the work needful for fulfillment of these high aims. The minister is one who has made a life commitment to the religious community as an institution, and to the redemptive power of religious community in the world.

By the corporate act of call, the members of the local congregation acknowledge their need for the service of one prepared by education and personal commitment, and they pledge to support the work of the minister, to provide for his or her personal life, and to labor with him or her in bringing to fruition the promise of the free church. The call signifies creation of a distinctive partnership in which minister and congregation alike affirm their intention to share in a religious pilgrimage of mutual care, forbearance, self-discipline and a desire to serve the common good.

The minister is empowered to lead a congregation in worship, nurture spiritual growth, and create a stronger community.

The minister, in keeping with our tradition of the free pulpit and the free pew, is to preach and

teach the truth as she or he sees it without fear of any person and with respect for all persons. The minister is to provide and enable others to provide occasions - personal and institutional - conducive to the spiritual and intellectual growth of the people of the congregation and to their power for social good.

The minister is to provide the agency or means of counsel and comfort.

The minister's life and vocation is to reflect honesty, forthright love and service with and for the congregation.

Here are some questions that Prairie might want to reflect on if it decides to engage in calling a minister.

- 1) How and in what manner will the congregation empower a minister to lead the congregation's Sunday service?
- 2) Can Prairie members remain open to the tradition of the free pulpit and free pew if the person who is called to serve as minister has a theology that is perceived as different, unsettling, provocative, etc.?
- 3) Do Prairie members feel a need and have a desire for a minister to offer reflections that are conducive to spiritual and intellectual growth and empowers the congregation to work for greater social good and justice?

These are offered as questions for pondering the course of Prairie as it continues to grow and embrace its mission and vision for the future.

Glad to continue to be journeying with you,
Ralph



Denominational News

2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY will take place in Salt Lake City on June 24-28. Our delegates will be Ingrid West and Prairie's President, Rachel Long. Two important items of business which they will be voting on will be our new UUA President, and the 2009 Statement of Conscience "Peacemaking" as well as attending the workshops on the Ethical Eating CSAI. We will be looking forward to their news and impressions when they return.

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 web site:

www.ulgm.org

THE CENTRAL MIDWEST DISTRICT ASSEMBLY was held in Waukesha on April 24-26. Our delegates were Anne Lundin and Kate Liu. Also attending were Rev. Ralph Tysinski, Heidi Hughes, Dorothy Krouse, Nancy Schraufnagel, and Pat Watkins. See the letter below written by Anne Lundin. She expressed the importance of attending such meetings so well that I wanted to share it with you in the hope that reading it will give others the incentive to plan on attending next year.

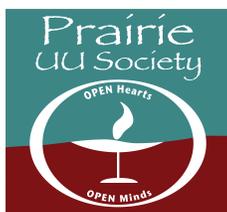
"I wanted you to know that I thoroughly enjoyed going to the CMwD meeting in Milwaukee I got so much out of it. I realize that I had been pretty active at one point in the Episcopal church and had felt part of that larger community. Until today I didn't have that strong an identification with UU, but I do sense that growing now. I found the whole weekend to be inspiring and fun. Some highlights: opening service, keynote address by Sharon Daloz Parks

on leadership as art, the workshop by Michael Schuler on sustainability (based on his new book just out), the general meeting followed by a debate of the presidential candidates, the fine banquet and fabulous choral concert, the closing service organized by youth along with a children's choir. Wow! I feel charged in a new way. I also met more people, particularly those from James Reeb. I gained more perspective from seeing and being with different UUsers. It was wonderful indeed." - Anne Lundin

THE CONGREGATIONAL STUDY /ACTION (CSAI) At the 2008 General Assembly, the delegates voted on the current CSAI, "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice" which our congregation should be involved in study and action on until 2112, when, after refinements and alterations it will come before the General Assembly to be voted on as the UUA's next Statement of Conscience. As part of Prairie's participation in this ongoing study, we will be having an "All-Prairie Book Read," culminating in the August 2nd Sunday Service at which we will all discuss the book--The Omnivore's Dilemma, by Michael Pollan. The purpose of the CSAI process is to provide the member UUA congregations with an opportunity to mobilize energy, ideas, and resources around a common issue, thus providing a deeper understanding of our religious position on the issue, and giving congregations a greater capacity to take effective action on the issue and then resulting in a clear statement of UU policy which will be expressed in our later Statement of Conscience.

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.



Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society
2010 Whenona Dr.
Madison, WI 53711