



# Prairie Fire

**October 22, 2009**

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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](http://www.uuprairie.org)

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## Calendar

### Friday, October 23 - Sunday, October 25, 2009

Prairie Retreat: Book Club, Women's Group, Spanish Conversation, Key Log Ceremony, silent auction, and more.

Sunday, October 25, 2009 - No service at Prairie Meeting house.

### Monday, October 26, 2009

6:30 pm - Spanish Speaker's Potluck at the home of Kate Tucker.

### Tuesday, October 27, 2009

2:00 pm – Prairie Elders meet to discuss a "Report Card for President Obama."

### Wednesday, October 28, 2009

7:00 pm – Program Committee meets; Finance Committee meets.

### Sunday, November 1, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

9:00 am - RE Committee meets.

10:00 am – service - "Transitions: The Rhythms of Our Lives," presented by the Helen Bond and Medusa Drums.

11:30 am - Spanish Conversation class.

11:45 am - Humanist Union potluck with Julie Merrill-Quinn.

12:30 pm - Percussion Workshop, in the couch room with Helen Bond.

2 - 5pm - Drum Circle Jam with Helen Bond upstairs at Prairie.

### Sunday, November 8, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am – service - "They Just Fade Away," presented by David Pyle.

11:30 am - Spanish Conversation class.

11:30 am - Board meeting.

### Saturday, November 14, 2009

5:30 pm - Social Action Committee presents "Seven Jewish Children" at Socialist Potluck.

### Sunday, November 15, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

9:00 am - RE Committee meets.

10:00 am – service - "Thinking About Immigration," presented by Rosalind Woodward, John Powell & Leila Pine.

11:30 am- Fall Parish Meeting: potluck begins at 11:30, meeting begins at 11:45.

### Thursday, November 19, 2009

7:00pm - The Housing and Property Committee will meet at Prairie.

Saturday, November 21, 2009 8:00am - 4:00pm - Trip to Andy Warhol Exhibit, Milwaukee Art Museum, organized by Pat Watkins.

## Upcoming Sunday Programs

**Sunday, October 25, 2009, "Key Log Ceremony," presented by Anne Lundin at the Pine Lake Camp.** A favorite Prairie Retreat tradition, member Anne Lundin will lead us in our annual Key Log Ceremony. The story goes that loggers, in the process of moving logs down river, would become very adept at spotting the one log, the "key log," that needed to be moved to free up a log jam. This participatory service invites you to share how you have found your "key logs" in the last year and gotten yourself "unjammed." There will be no service at the Prairie meeting house today.

**Sunday, November 1, 2009 10:00 am - "Transitions: The Rhythms of Our Lives," presented by Helen Bond and Medusa Drums.** Prairie's traditional ritual of remembrance, a mixture of celebration and mourning that affirms life and gives us a chance to share our grief. We will be joined by a special guest, Helen Bond, who will share her musical talents with us both during the service, and, after a potluck lunch shared with the Humanists Union, with a private percussion workshop, followed by a community drum circle jam.

**Sunday, November 8, 2009, 10:00 am - "They Just Fade Away," presented by David Pyle.** The current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are rapidly leading us towards a crisis in the lives of our military families and in the lives of our veterans. This Veteran's day must not be just about honoring their service, but looking seriously on the costs they bear, and our responsibility to help them bear that cost.

**Sunday, November 15, 2009, 10:00 am - "Thinking About Immigration," presented by Rosalind Woodward, John Powell, and Leila Pine.** In these days of hysteria about immigration, three members of First Unitarian Society will present some perspectives that might help us think more clearly about it. John Powell will give an historical perspective, Leila Pine will give one answer to the question "So what is happening on our southern borders?" and Rosalind Woodward, an immigrant herself, will talk about what it is like to be a stranger in a new land. We'll also have the treat of hearing soprano soloist Amber Nicole Dilger.

## Religious Education News

On October 4th our RE students began the first stage of creating a butterfly garden in the Prairie backyard. This is an initiative brought to us by the Green Sanctuary Committee. Karen Deaton and Kathy Converse spent the morning educating our youth on what is a butterfly garden, how it will look and how we can make one.

Many of our youth already know about these types of gardens. As RE student Aaron Liu explained it's a garden that contains flowers that house and provide food for caterpillars and butterflies. The end result will be a beautiful garden that will house many butterflies of several varieties.

Throughout the year we will be working inside as well as outside on this garden. As Karen said, this is a gift from the RE students to the congregation. I would also like to thank Andy Garst for filling the back of his truck of compost so we could shovel it out and spread it in the garden. Thanks Andy!

### Prairie Web Sites:

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

### 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.



Next weekend will be the annual Prairie retreat. This is a time for families to join the larger Prairie family for a weekend of fun. If you haven't had a chance to look over the activities for the weekend please do. There will be childcare available for families of young children on Saturday (after breakfast until dinner). During this time parents are free to take part in the many workshops available. Children will have fun in all the activities the retreat offers. One of those activities is the Halloween parade before the start of the Saturday night talent show. Make sure you bring your costume!

November 6-8 is the youth CON event in Evanston, Illinois. I would like to give a big "thank you" to Erin Bosch for offering to be the chaperon for the weekend. She will be supervising three of our high school students during this event. These events are great for youth to meet other UU kids their age and take part in fun and educational activities all weekend. Have fun everyone!

As always, if you would like to lend a helping hand in any of our RE activities please let me or RE Chair, Robin Proud, know. We'd love to have you join us.

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

## Our Society

### **Fall Parish Meeting: Sunday, November 15th at 11:45 am**

It's time for us to come together for a Parish Meeting, as we do twice each year. Our major business items, such as electing officers and approving the year's budget, are done at the Spring meeting. That leaves us time in the fall to inform each other about what is happening at Prairie, and to continue planning for the future of our congregation. Mark the date: Sunday, 11/15/09 at 11:45, with a potluck at 11:30. You'll see from the agenda that there are several issues we'll be covering, and it should be a lively and interesting discussion.

#### Agenda:

1. Opening words and Chalice lighting
2. Approval of May 3, 2009 Parish Meeting minutes
3. Update on Strategic Plan
4. Ministerial planning and upcoming congregational sessions
5. Results from our building consultant
6. Governance models presentation
7. Formation of Bylaws Task Force
8. Questions on Committee, Minister, and Treasurer's reports (written, emailed ahead)
9. Closing Words

Please join us - we hope to see you there.

*Rachel Long*

*President, Prairie UU Society*

### **Prairie Elders Meet October 27th**

Prairie people over 65 are invited to the Prairie Elders meeting Tuesday, October 27th. 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. Informal conversation begins at 1:30 pm and discussion on the topic is from 2:00-4:00. Newcomers welcome.

This month, our topic will be "A Report Card for President Obama." Thousands of websites and reams of print address this topic from countless angles. Explore any aspect you wish, offer your assessment or that of others, or just come and listen. If you need a means of focus, weigh a specific presidential action against a UU principle. Handouts welcome.

We meet in the Nakoma Room in the Heritage Oaks building, Oakwood Village West. Parking is available in front or underneath the building. You can bring your own beverage cup and snacks to share. Call contacts listed for directions or a ride: Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Gordon Cunningham 230-3367, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

### **Two Humanist Union Sponsored Events**

If you are at the Pine Lake Camp retreat, at 1 pm on Saturday Oct. 24 you'll have a chance to hear about what the Secular Coalition for America is doing in Washington from one of the national organization's officers, Ron Solomon. For a preview of some of the issues the organization is taking a stand on, visit their website at <http://www.secular.org/>.

The Humanist Union's next regular monthly meeting at Prairie will be on Sunday Nov. 1. Following our usual potluck lunch at 11:45 am, we'll have a discussion from 12:30 to 1:30 pm on issues raised by the insertion of religion into the health care debate in Washington, led by Julie Merrill-Quinn. Did you know, for example, that Sens. Kerry and Hatch proposed an amendment that would prohibit insurers from denying benefits "for religious or spiritual health care", meaning payments to Christian Science "practitioners" who charge for praying for sick followers.

*Bob Park, Humanist Union*

### **Book Club Announces New Selections**

The Prairie Book Club meets monthly, after the Sunday Service at Prairie, about 11:45 a.m. Bring potluck food to share. This is an open book club. You may come whether or not you have read the book. Here's what the book club will be reading from October through December 2009 :

Saturday, October 24th (at the retreat,) the group will be discussing What Was She Thinking: Notes on a Scandal, by Zoe Heller. "A lonely schoolteacher reveals more than she intends when she records the story of her best friend's affair with a pupil in this sly, insightful novel...What Was She Thinking? is a story of repression and passion, envy and complacency, friendship and loneliness. A complex psychological portrait framed as a wicked satire, it is by turns funny, poignant, and sinister. With it, Zoë Heller surpasses the promise of her critically acclaimed first novel, Everything You Know."

Sunday, November 29 – Here If You Need Me – A True Story by Kate Braestrup. This is the memoir of a middle aged woman who becomes a UU minister after being widowed and serves as a chaplain in Maine's Forest Service. Publisher's Weekly says that the author's "insightful essays are extraordinarily well written, mingling elements of police procedural and touching love story with trenchant observations about life and death. Alert to comic detail even in grisly circumstances...she tells stories of lost children, a suicide, drunken accidents and a murder, always with compassion and a concern for the big questions inescapably provoked by tragic events." The review at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/28/AR2007082801575.html> will definitely get you to read this book! 211 pages. Recommended by Barb Park.

Sunday, December 20 – The Yiddish Policeman's Union by Michael Chabon is a "detective story set in an alternate history version of the present day, based on the premise that during World War II, a temporary settlement for Jewish refugees was established in Sitka, Alaska in 1941, and that the fledgling State of Israel was destroyed in 1948. The novel is set in Sitka, which it depicts as a large,

Yiddish-speaking metropolis.” (from Wikipedia) The book has won several science fiction awards. 224 pages.

*Mary Mullen, 608.298.0843 or mmullen(at) chorus.net*

### **All About the Prairie Caring Committee**

Our Prairie Caring Committee is here to support you as members at times in your life when you may feel the need for help from your church community. If you are ill, having surgery, have had a death in your family, having a child, or just need to discuss an issue with someone you know, we are here to serve you. Likewise, if you hear of someone in Prairie who might need our support, contact one of us, Rev. Ralph Tyksinski, or our administrator, Kate. Your concern will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

We are pleased to welcome several new members to our Caring Committee this year. The members of the committee are: Erin Bosch, Linda Colletti, Randy Converse, Jill Cornejo, Aileen Nettleton, Robin Proud, and Linda Sheehy. Each of our committee members has experience in providing support to others, either professionally or through volunteer work. We have divided up our membership so that each of us is a “contact person” for a specific group of individuals. You should be receiving a letter from “your” Caring Committee member so that you will have a direct person to contact. However, we want you to feel free to contact any one of our members or Rev. Ralph.

As volunteers, we will do our best to set up support for you or make a referral to either our minister or a community agency. If you do not reach one of us or get a response, we may be traveling (or ill, ourselves!) In that case, please contact another person right away so that we can work as a team to help you. We look forward to serving you and our church community.

*Aileen Nettleton, Caring Committee Chair*

### **Ministering to Prairie’s Future: Upcoming Events from the Long-Range Planning Committee**

What visions do we have for Prairie’s future? How do different ministerial approaches and relationships factor into these visions? What can we learn from other UU congregations that have undertaken similar explorations? Several upcoming events organized by the Long-Range Planning Committee are designed to facilitate discussion on these questions, and more. Join in the conversation!

At the Prairie UU Society Retreat – on Saturday, October 24, 10-11 am, Ken Skog and Mary Mullen will present a workshop entitled “A Minister, a Rabbi, and a Priest walked into a Bar....”. Join the Long-Range Planning Committee to share reminiscences of ministers or other religious leaders who have played a positive role in your life.

After the service on Sunday, Nov. 22, Glenda Cosenza of the Dekalb, Illinois Unitarian Universalist Church will be visiting for a Q&A session about the differences between roles of settled and contract ministers, and the process her congregation undertook when shifting from a contract to settled minister. Please see the related article in this issue of Prairie Fire for more details.

*Robyn Perrin, Chair, Long-Range Planning Committee*

*For questions on any of these events, please contact Robyn, Christina Klock, Mary Mullen, Aileen Nettleton, or Ken Skog.*

### **The Prairie Retreat is Coming - Last Minute News Flash!**

We have a great turn-out for the retreat this year and look forward to spending the weekend together. Here are a couple of last minute notes for you before you go:



Getting there: The retreat site is easy to get to: take highway 90/94 out of Madison to the north / west, then get on 39/51 going north. Take exit 113 (County Rd E / Westfield) and go left on County Road E for 0.6 mi (through downtown Westfield.) Turn right on County Road M and go 7.3 mi. Turn left on Pine Lake Road into the camp. It takes about an hour and a half to drive from Madison.

Where to park: Please park all vehicles in the designated parking areas (next to cabins or in main parking lot). It is important that all roads in the main camp are kept open and free of vehicles for all guests and for emergency vehicle access. Please observe the reserved signs which designate parking for camp vehicles and accessible parking for the disabled.

What to bring: If you are coming on Friday, please bring finger food to share for an informal potluck. All other meals are included in the registration cost. Bring your short (2-4 minutes, please) talent show act and anything needed for your act. You may wish to bring a favorite board game to share. If you need them, your book club book and your recorder. Though the paths are lit, a flashlight might be helpful for getting around in the evening. **Do check your registration form** - if you are in a cabin, you need to bring your own bedding and towels. No matter where you stay, you will need to bring all of your own toiletries.

Pine Lake Camp Rules: No smoking, no alcohol. Parents need to know where their children are at all times, and groups of kids or teens may not stay overnight in a room without an adult. If you encounter any problems, please come to Robin, Phyllis, or Kate first.

Program Schedule Summary: All=anyone, Ad=adults, I=*intergenerational*, C=*children*

#### **Friday:**

**Beginning at 6pm until 7:30pm** - All- arrival, finger food potluck, settling in to your room. I= *Icebreakers by Erin Bosch in Amphlett Hall.*

**7:30 - 9pm** - All= mixers and games and tournament sign ups, Amphlett Hall. I= *Generations Dancing with Ingrid West in the Oakwood Center, Bonfire and S'mores, outside at fire ring with Kate Liu.*

**9:00 - 10:30 pm** - I= *board games, visiting in Amphlett Hall, Charades with Paula Pachciarz in Oakwood (probably best for older children.)*

**10:30- 11:30 pm** - Ad = Discussion, "The Pig That Wants to be Eaten," with Rick Ruecking 1st floor lounge Rader.

#### **Saturday:**

**7:45 am** - All- breakfast set-up

**8:00 am** - All - breakfast in Amphlett Hall, continue ping pong and horseshoe tournament signups. Silent Auction opens in Amphlett.

**9-10 am** - C = *Uncle Rick's Circus Parade games, led by Rick Ruecking at Amphlett Hall, Low Ropes course for kids 8 & up with Nick Coenen at Nature Center, Nature center show and tell with Galen Smith. Ad = Ware Lecture, led by Rachel Long room 22 Rader Center, Book Group with Mary Mullen, lower level lounge Rader. I= ping pong in Amphlett, horseshoes at horseshoe pit with Erin Bosch.*

**10-11 am** - C = *continue Ropes Course, story time with Rose Smith first floor lounge Rader. Ad= "A minister, a priest, and a rabbi walked into a bar..." with Ken Skog first floor conference room Rader, Restorative Yoga with Katherine Peterson in Oakwood. I= ping pong and horseshoes continue.*

**11-12** - C = *finish ropes course, Yoga animals for kids with Paula Pachciarz and Katherine Peterson in Oakwood. Ad= Women's group with Mary Somers, first floor lounge Rader. I= ping pong and horseshoes continue.*

**11:45 am** - All - lunch set-up

**12:00 noon** - All - lunch in Amphlett Hall, talent show sign up.

**1:00 pm** - C = *Kid fun / child care in Amphlett Hall. Ad= Ukrainian Easter Eggs with Kate Liu in craft cabin, Ethical Humanist group with Bob Park in lower level lounge Rader. I= watercolor painting with Mary Somers at Amphlett Hall.*

**2 - 3 pm** - C= *Bollywood Dancing with the Malke-Eligantis in Oakwood. Ad= making collages with Robin Proud in the craft cabin. I= Nature Walk with Galen Smith beginning at nature center, Hymns and Rounds with the Tyksinskis in lower level lounge Rader.*

**2:30 pm** - Ad= Beginning recorder lessons with Mary Frantz in room 22 Rader.

**3 - 4 pm** - C = *Pumpkin Face Painting with Rachel Long in the craft cabin. Teens= Teen Talk with Rebecca*

Malke in first floor lounge Rader. Ad= Recorder lessons with Ruth Calden and Mary Frantz in room 22 Rader, Bridge Lesson with Phyllis Long in first floor conference room Rader. *I = Creating Haiku poetry with Marcia Johnson in lower level conference room Rader.*

**4 - 5pm - C = Paper bag crafts with Ingrid West in the craft cabin.** Ad= Spanish Conversation class with Marcia Johnson in lower level conference room Rader, Knitting circle with Karen Deaton in first floor lounge Rader. *I= Fun Dancing with the Tyksinskis in Oakwood.*

**5:15 pm** - All = table setting. Ad = Slavic Pronunciation, first floor lounge Rader.

**5:30** - All = Dinner in Amphlett. Silent Auction ends.

**6:30 pm** - All= dinner clean-up, Free time

**7:00 - 8:15 pm** - All = Talent Show led by Erin Bosch in Oakwood.

**8:15- 10pm** - All - Folk Dance lesson with Doleta Chapru, followed by dancing at 8:30 pm until 10 pm in Oakwood.

### **Sunday:**

**7:30 am** - All = breakfast set-up

**8:00 am** - All = breakfast

**9:00 am** - All = clean up, both breakfast and general cleaning

**10:00 am** - All = Key Log ceremony with Anne Lundin at the fire ring.

**11:00 am** - All = final clean up and departure

Complete program descriptions are available via PrairieNews and on paper at the retreat. If you have any last minute questions, please contact one of the following: Robin Proud, registrar, 661-0776; Kate Liu, administrator, 271-8218; or Phyllis Long, program coordinator, 608-325-7397.

We look forward to seeing you there!

*Robin, Phyllis, and Kate*

### **Spanish Speaker's Potluck**

The next Spanish Speaker's potluck will be Monday, October 26th at 6:30 pm at the home of Kate Tucker, 4504 Camden Rd. Please call Kate at 221-2168 for directions, or Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382 for more information.

### **Green Committee News**

Is anyone interested in helping to study the costs and benefits of a solar photovoltaic system for Prairie? Prairie committed to doing a study this year as part of the Green Sanctuary accreditation process. This study is to be presented at the parish meeting next spring. Al Nettleton is coordinating this study and would like assistance. If you are interested in participating, please contact Al at 238-6053.

As a result of our signing up for Green Power, Madison Gas and Electric contacted Prairie and will put together a small blurb about Prairie's Green Congregation project to put on their Web site. We'll send the link to it as soon as it is posted.

*Al Nettleton, Green Committee*

### **Ministerial Options: Q & A with DeKalb UU Past President Glenda Cosenza**

On Sunday, November 21st after the service, the Long Range Planning Committee is delighted to invite all interested members to join us in a meeting with Glenda Cosenza of the DeKalb UU Church to learn more about Ministerial Options. We are very fortunate that Glenda has agreed to share the experiences of the DeKalb congregation, as it moved from having a year-to-year "contract minister" to making the decision to have a "settled" minister several years ago. Glenda was the president of the board during this process and will share how the change has impacted the relationship between the minister and the congregation. There will be time for questions for Glenda about their situation and changes that have taken place.

We will meet in the upstairs Meeting Room immediately following the service. Pizza will be provided (donations encouraged). Child care will be available. If you can let Aileen know if you need child care, that will help us know how many children to anticipate.

This is one of the opportunities your Long Range Planning Committee is setting up as part of our year of exploring ministerial relationships as Prairie looks to its own future. Please plan to join us! Questions? Contact any committee member: Robyn Perrin, Ken Skog, Christina Klock, Aileen Nettleton, or Mary Mullen.

*Aileen Nettleton, Long Range Planning Committee*

### **Prairie Fund Raising Museum Trip: "Andy Warhol: The Last Decade"**

On Saturday, November 21, Pat Watkins will be leading a fund raising trip to the Andy Warhol exhibit at the Milwaukee Art Museum. The package will include bus transportation, admission to the museum and three Warhol related exhibits, and lunch at the historic Astor Hotel, for \$62. More information will be available later, but if interested, phone Pat Watkins at 233-5795. You can send your check, made out to Prairie UU Society, to Pat Watkins' home address to make your reservation. Reservations will be due by November 4th.

### **Housing and Property Notes**

Prairie has discontinued the open-ended collection of food items in bins in our entryway for food pantries. The bins present both an aesthetic issue and a possible insect problem. In the future, food or monetary collections for pantries will occur on specific Sundays with plenty of advance notice. Please do not bring items to Prairie between collection days as we do not have a good place for storing donated items.

Thank you,

*Kate Liu, Administrator*

### **WOW group**

Prairie's Women's group, known as WOW, will meet next on Saturday, October 24th at the Prairie retreat. Check the program schedule for the time. New members are always welcome. For more information or to get on the Prairie WOW email list, contact Mary Somers, 276-8397 or [marysomers44\(at\)charter.net](mailto:marysomers44(at)charter.net).

### **Movie Group**

The movie group will not meet for a film in November, but will resume on December 10th at 7pm with a viewing of "Ugetsu," a 6th century Japanese feudal war epic by director Kenji Mizoguchi. Please bring snacks to share.

## **Social Action News**

### **El Salvador Delegation to Speak**

Wednesday, November 11th, Mary Somers and Barbara Alvarado, El Slavador delegation members, will speak on "Mining and Radio of the Brave" at 7 pm at 825 Hughes Place, South Madison Police Precinct, just off Park Street behind McDonald's. Discussion will include not only the trip and violence against anti-mining activists, but the situation in Honduras and how a radio station like the one in Robert Park's garage could help the people who live in the mountains of El Salvador and Honduras.

### **Homeless Shelter News**

Several blankets were collected for the men's homeless shelter. Thank you to everyone who contributed a blanket. Also newsworthy is that next month we do not need any volunteers for our regular shift at the Men's Homeless Shelter. A member of First Society who is turning 16 wants to celebrate her birthday by inviting her friends and family to work at the shelter with her! She and her friends and family will work on "our" November 7th Saturday, as First had all their volunteer shelter spots filled for the year.



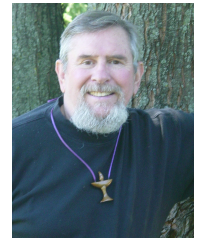
## Social Action to present "Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza", by Caryl Churchill

This play was presented by the Social Action Committee over the summer, following a Sunday program on Palestine, and is now being performed again on November 14th at the Socialist Potluck located at the WilMar Neighborhood Center, 535 Jennifer Street. Potluck begins at 5:30, announcements at 6:30, then the play, followed by open discussion. The play is free but donations will be accepted for Medical Aid for Palestinians.

Mary Somers, Social Action Chair

## Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

During these autumnal days of October I am becoming more deeply aware of the cooling temperatures and shortening of daylight. It is a time for a clearing from the skies of the heat and haziness of summer. For some of us these crisp days may signal a time for gaining clarity about what we want to dedicate or rededicate our lives toward achieving. These are days when we become more aware of and appreciate the crispness and sharpness of the realities that ask us about what plans we have for our various selves: personal, family, community, country and world. In giving ourselves to these larger realms of meaning we can often be unwittingly deceived by our desire for perfection.



The Biologist, Lewis Thomas in his marvelous book, "The Medusa and the Snail" offers a cautionary note: *We have evolved scientists . . . and so we know a lot about DNA, but if our kind of mind had been confronted with the problem of designing a similar replicating molecule . . . we'd never have succeeded. We would have made one fatal mistake: our molecule would have been perfect . . . The capacity to blunder slightly is the real marvel of DNA. Without this special attribute. we would still be anaerobic bacteria and there would be no music.*

As Prairie moves forward toward making major decisions about our future during these coming months it is worth remembering that we don't have to achieve perfection in our planning or decision making. To blunder, slightly or markedly, is the normal shape of human achievements.

UU minister and author, Forrest Church, who died at age 61 this past month after a three year battle with terminal cancer wrote this about his own struggles with our perfectionist tendencies.

### The Imperfectionist

The reason I've been able to produce  
so much is that I'm not a perfectionist  
- I'm an imperfectionist.

I'm confident that everything I say  
can be improved upon by others,  
and that's my great strength,  
because I know that it won't been improved upon by  
others unless I take the first step.

When we only do things which please us,  
or don't frighten us,  
after a while fewer and fewer things please us.

Over time, our circle of options diminishes  
until we are prisoners in gardens of our own making.

The more decisions you make in your life,  
the more times you act,  
the more certain it is that you will be wrong.

To be fulfilled we need to recognize,



all of us,  
that the world doesn't owe us a living  
- rather we owe the world a living.  
And in the brief time that is given us,  
we must somehow learn to give ourselves away.  
*Forrest Church*



May it be considered that as in our personal lives it is a worthy goal for our Prairie UU Society life to be learning how to give ourselves away.

Glad to be journeying, imperfectly, with you,  
*Ralph*

## UU Community News

### **Fair Wisconsin to Speak at First Society**

The LGBT Welcoming Committee of The First Unitarian Society of Madison warmly invites the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & questioning members of the Reeb and Prairie Unitarian Universalist congregations to a potluck on Friday, December 4, at 6:00 pm in the Landmark Auditorium of the First Unitarian church. A speaker from Fair Wisconsin will be on hand to update us on the current status of LGBT rights in Wisconsin and answer questions. An award will also be presented to Bill Wartmann for his impressive humanitarian work on behalf of Unitarian LGBTs. Please join us for an evening of community and celebration! Bring a dish to pass, a desire to meet your fellow UUs and a sense of fun. RSVP to Liz Dannenbaum ([liz.winter.dannenbaum@gmail.com](mailto:liz.winter.dannenbaum@gmail.com) or phone 221-3997) by Sunday, November 29th so seating numbers and childcare can be arranged.  
*Liz Dannenbaum, First Unitarian Society*



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