



Prairie Fire

December 22, 2009

In this issue:

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

Tuesday, December 22, 2009

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood. Topic is Ethical Buying.

Wednesday, December 23, 2009

5:30 pm - Humanist Union hosts HumanLight at Prairie.

Thursday, December 24, 2009

7:00 pm - service - "Christmas Eve, Carols, and Candlelighting," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

Sunday, December 27, 2009 - 8:45 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "Socially Responsible Investing," presented by Nick Abts.
IHN Week Begins.

Friday, January 1, 2010 - Happy New Year! Prairie Fire Bulletin items due.

Sunday, January 3, 2010 - 8:45 am - Choir Rehearsal

9:00 am - RE Committee meets. Childcare provided.
10:00 am - service - "Looking Forward to News Stories in 2010."
11:45 am - Humanist Union potluck, followed by group discussion.

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

7:00 pm - Finance committee meeting at the home of Barb Park, 5610 Hammersley.

Thursday, January 7, 2010

6:30 pm - Spanish Speaker's Potluck at the home of Dave and Marcia Johnson.

Sunday, January 10, 2010 - 8:45 am - Choir Rehearsal

10:00 am - service - "Prophetic Love," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.
11:30 am - Prairie Board meeting. Potluck at 11:30, meeting begins at 11:45am.

Friday, January 15, 2010 - Prairie Fire articles due.

Sunday, January 17, 2010

8:45 am - Choir Rehearsal
9:00 am - RE Committee meets. Childcare provided.
10:00 am - service - "Friends of the Deaf - Giving Help and Hope to the Deaf in Guatemala," presented by Chris Tackett.

Sunday, January 24, 2010

8:45 am - Choir rehearsal.
10:00 am - service.
11:45 am - Book Club meets to discuss The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and her niece Annie Barrows.

Upcoming Programs

Thursday, December 24, 2009, "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. In the words of Sophia Lyon Fahs, "Each night a child is born is a holy night – A time for singing, A time for wondering, A time for worshipping." This, an intergenerational service, draws from Christian teachings which call us to respond to holy love by seeking peace and good will for humankind.

Sunday, December 27, 2009, 10:00am "Socially Responsible Investing," presented by Nick Abts. Financial concerns plague our everyday lives. We have to stay on top of everyday bills, long term saving, and risk management. How can we be sure we're not only managing our personal finances successfully but contributing to society's greater good? The program will discuss both environmental and human impact of savings and investment decisions. Nick Abts is a financial professional working with Strategic Wealth Management, LLC in Madison. He has been working in the financial services industry since June 2008 and is currently pursuing his Chartered Life Underwriter designation. He has a law degree from the University of Wisconsin and maintains an estate planning legal practice at Abts Legal Services, LLC in addition to his financial practice. He and wife Cara joined Prairie in February 2009 and have one child, Felix, born in July.

Sunday, January 3, 2010, 10:00 am - "Looking Forward to News Stories in 2010." 2009 was full of news that affected us all. This year we had a new president, discussed universal healthcare, immigration, and the right to marry among others. We'll briefly look back on 2009 news stories that were of particular interest to us as religious liberals and share what we hope to hear for 2010.

Sunday, January 10, 2010, 10:00 am - "Prophetic Love ," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski. We explore the lives and influences that Freethinkers, Humanists, Jews, Unitarian Universalists and other Liberal Religionists had on Martin Luther King, Jr., as we celebrate his birthday, January 15, 1929.

Sunday, January 17, 2010, 10:00 am - "Friends of the Deaf - Giving Help and Hope to the Deaf in Guatemala," presented by Chris Tackett. In his presentation, Mr. Chris Tackett will describe the current conditions that the deaf face on a daily basis in Guatemala and the limited resources available to help them. He will give background information as to how he became acquainted with this issue and what motivated him to found "Friends of the Deaf". He will also provide some statistics to help demonstrate how difficult life is in Guatemala, not only for the deaf, but hearing folks as well. In addition, he will describe the great work that Las Voces is currently doing to help the deaf, their families and their communities, and their plans for the future. Chris Tackett spent nearly a decade teaching in high schools and has spent most of his career as an electrical engineer. Adopting a child from Guatemala brought him in contact with this culture. He retired there in 2008. Chris is the father of Prairie member Jill Cornejo.

Religious Education News

Happy Hanukkah, Solstice and Eid! Merry Christmas and Kwanzaa! December is full of lots of holiday cheer and in RE we're spreading that cheer in a fun and educational way.

Our annual Nifty Gifty event was another success! Over 20 students spent the morning of December 6th painting, gluing and assembling ten homemade projects for friends and family. Two of our projects used recycled materials. I would like to thank Kathy Converse for helping with planning projects and setting up all the tables and projects. Kathy has done Nifty Gifty for many years and we all appreciate her hard work and creative

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>

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 or call 271-8218.



craft ideas. Thank you Kathy! I would also like to thank all those who volunteered that morning either by helping our youth make the projects or by bringing in cookies and fruit to snack on. It's because of all of you that the morning was fun and stress free.

There is a lot going on in the RE department. We recently hired a new childcare provider for our nursery. Katie O'Brien joined our staff last month and her first day was Dec. 6th. I'll be introducing her to you all this Sunday. Please make her feel welcomed by coming downstairs to introduce yourself and say hello.

Last week I spent the morning at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation shadowing their DRE, Virginia Harrison. Many of you met Virginia last month when she was at Prairie shadowing me and our RE program. I often forget how lucky we are to be living in a city with three UU churches. This gives me the opportunity to network with the other two directors and their RE programs to get ideas and different perspectives. I hope to view the program at First Unitarian Society sometime next year.

Last month I joined with Virginia for James Reeb's Thanksgiving Eve service. Virginia and I had crafts for the children to make and our very own Doleta Chapru and Judy Wacker were there to entertain the students with their accordion and violin. Doleta taught them a fun dance that had parents talking at the reception. It was still being talked about at Reeb last week! Thank you Doleta and Judy.

The morning I was gone our RE Chair, Robin Proud, planned a very fun Hanukkah party for our youth. Rose Smith read a Hanukkah story and there was dreidel making and potato pancake (latke) baking. Thank you Robin and to all who volunteered for educating our youth about this Jewish holiday in such a fun way.

This Sunday is Prairie's annual Symbol Tree service. The last day of RE for 2009, December 27th, will be a New Year's party. We'll start the morning off with a spirit circle to reflect on this past year and share what we would like for 2010. Regular classes will begin Jan. 3rd.

I hope you are all enjoying this holiday season and wish you a safe and happy new year!

Rebecca Malke (YREC)
youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org

Our Society

Glenda Cosenza of the Dekalb UU Fellowship Visits Prairie UU Society for Q&A on Settled Ministry

On November 22, 2009, the Long-Range Planning Committee of Prairie UU Society hosted a member of the Dekalb, IL UU Fellowship (DUUF), Dr. Glenda Cosenza, for an informational session on the experiences of her congregation during its transition from contract to settled ministry. This session was part of Prairie's year-long exploration of ministry and ministerial relationships.

Dr. Cosenza held several different leadership positions within the organization during the overall time span of this transition, including Board President and Chair of the Finance Committee.

Dr. Cosenza gave an overview of the history of the congregation and its ministerial relationships. DUUF is small and lay-led. Its members voted unanimously in 1990 (when the size of the congregation had shrunk to 15 members) to engage a contract minister. The same minister served in

contract capacity from 1991 to 2008. The initial appointment was part-time (50%), later raised to 60%. Milestones and changes during this period included significant growth (to 67 members by 2003, currently 88 members); purchase of a building; and strengthening/harmonization of lay-led services by instilling a training program for lay leaders of Sunday services.

During this period, a Long-Range Planning task force was formed to analyze future ministerial needs. The task force recommended that ministry appointment be increased to 100% to more fully meet the needs of the congregation. DUUF was awarded a \$10,000 Chalice Grant to aid in this transition, and also received a \$5,000 grant from the City of Dekalb for building improvements. A fundraising campaign within the congregation yielded more than \$50,000. However, the congregation was aware that it did not meet the Unitarian Universalist Association recommended guideline for being able to financially sustain a full-time minister. The UUA recommends that for full-time ministry appointments, a congregation should have at least 100-150 pledging units (not members; in other words, 100-150 households.)

In ~2007-2008, the congregation voted to call the same minister who had been serving in contract ministry since 1991 as a settled minister, at a 100% appointment. Unfortunately, the recession and the death of several major benefactors within the church negatively impacted the financial resources of the congregation in 2009, and the congregation was unable to sustain a full-time appointment. Currently, the minister is serving at 70% capacity.

Dr. Cosenza noted that the congregation continues to view itself as lay-led, even with a settled minister, and that the minister prepares only 2 services a month, with the other 2-3 services per month being lay-led. This arrangement was deliberately entered because the congregation and minister desired ministerial focus to be on other areas, such as community outreach and pastoral care.

In remarking on changes in the ministerial relationship that occurred upon transition from contract to settled ministry, Dr. Cosenza said that the relationship changed subtly but dramatically, and resulted in a closer partnership between the congregation and the minister.

For a more extensive summary of Dr. Cosenza's remarks, please contact Robyn Perrin (robyn@perrinhome.com, 345-1862).

Robyn M. Perrin
Chairperson, Long-Range Planning Committee

Prairie Elders

The Prairie Elders group 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 meet once a month, typically on the fourth Tuesday, beginning at 1:30 pm for informal conversation and a more structured discussion beginning at 2pm. We meet in the Nakoma room in the Heritage Oaks building, Oakwood Village West. (You can park in front or underneath the building.) Our December meeting will be on the 22nd, discussing Ethical Buying, and our January meeting will be on the 26th. Topics alternate between general issues and personal interests, and our "round robin" format gives all an opportunity to speak and to hear. If you are interested and would like more information about the group, or would like to arrange a ride, please contact one of the following: Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Gordon Cunningham 230-3367, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

Doleta Chapru
Prairie Elders

COMING SOON - PRAIRIE'S SERVICE AUCTION !

The Service Auction is scheduled for February 28th with Orange Schroeder again acting as our Auctioneer. Start thinking about what services you would like to contribute. You may also be longing to bid on an item - suggest it and we will try to find someone willing to put it up for auction. Send your items to Barbara Park at [barpark\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:barpark(at)gmail.com).

This is also a good time to review what you bought or promised last year so you can get those things done before the auction rolls around again. There is a spreadsheet hanging on the bulletin board across from the greeting table at Prairie; or you can contact Kate Liu, Prairie's administrator, at [admin\(at\)uuprairie.org](mailto:admin(at)uuprairie.org).

Barbara Park
Finance Committee Chair

Housing and Property Notes

The heating system and several of our lights at the Prairie meeting house are controlled by a program called "ActiveHome." This program is what allows your administrator to set the heat to come on for you when you use the building at night, also turns the heat on for us on Sunday mornings so that the building is warm for us when we arrive for services. To help this system to work most efficiently, here's how you can help: when you are ready to leave the building, look at the thermostat at the back of the main meeting room. Make sure that the heat is set as low as possible on the thermostat that has the green light above it, and make sure that the other one (with the red light) is set at 65 degrees. Don't worry about whether the red or green lights are on or off, and please don't leave both thermostats at the lowest settings (or at 65.) There is a pair of thermostats for the downstairs too, on the wall to the right of the door that leads into the 4-5 classroom. Leave these set the same way as the upstairs ones: green thermostat as low as possible, red thermostat at 65. The ActiveHome program makes sure that the heat will not stay on too long, so as long as we leave the thermostats set correctly, the program will take care of the rest.

On another note, please help keep the Prairie kitchen clean and pest free. Do not leave any food at Prairie, unless someone is taking responsibility for using or taking it that day. Please do not "donate" food by leaving it somewhere in the kitchen unlabeled. If you do leave food at Prairie, be sure to label it with the current DATE and the NAME of the group or person who is responsible for it. All unsealed containers must be put in the refrigerator - this includes the sugar and creamer bowls we use on Sunday morning. We have had pests in the past and it is crucial that we not put out food for them. If you are cleaning up and aren't sure if a leftover will be used, throw it out or take it home. It is important that we keep the refrigerator clean and uncluttered so that it can be used for church functions. Our kitchen guru, Paula Pachciarz, intends to be ruthless about throwing out items and keeping our kitchen clean - thank you Paula!

Kate Liu
Prairie Admin

Governance Vision Group Forming

We are still looking for a couple of folks to help envision the best way to structure Prairie at this stage in our growth. This group will discuss alternative ways to lead a church, and make a recommendation to the Board as to what would suit us best. It should be an intriguing discussion - let me know by January 10th if you want to join us.

Rachel Long
Prairie UU President

Humanist Union News

At the Meeting House on Wednesday, Dec. 23, the Humanist Union will host the group's biggest party of the year, our annual HumanLight celebration. The event is cosponsored with the Madison Skeptics and Madison Brights, and will take place from 5:30 to 9:30 pm. Ours will be one of more than 20 such events scheduled around the country, as listed at <http://humanlight.org/>. Your family is invited to join us in this celebration of humanism and the light of reason.



Our full program for the evening will include an appetizer and dessert potluck, music by award winning Madison singer/songwriter Ken Lonquist, storytelling with Rose Smith, folk dancing led by Doleta Chapru, arts & crafts organized by Julie Q., and star gazing in Marlborough Park if it is a clear night or otherwise an indoor program led by amateur astronomer and photographer John Rummel, with Jane Esbensen as our master of ceremonies. See the local event website at <http://humanlight.madisonwi.us/> for more details. If you can join us, our planning committee would appreciate and RSVP to humanistunion@gmail.com indicating how many adults and children are coming.

The monthly meetings of the Humanist Union usually occur on the first Sunday of the month and include a potluck lunch and discussion. On Jan. 3, 2010, our potluck at 11:45 am will be followed by a group discussion on the topic "Humanist review of 2009 news stories/program ideas for 2010". Prior to the meeting participants are asked to review news stories from 2009 dealing with issues of particular concern to humanists (separation of church and state, discrimination against atheists and gays, efforts to organize coalitions of humanist/atheist/agnostic/freethinker groups in the U.S., international effects of religious bias, etc.). Each will have the opportunity to give a brief summary of one or two stories that he or she finds to be of particular significance. We will conclude by discussing which topics we would like to deal with in our monthly meetings during 2010. For a sampling of stories see the media page of our website at <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/media.htm>.

Bob Park, Humanist Union

Spanish Speaker's Potluck

The Spanish Speaker's potluck will take a break for the month of December, but will resume in January. The next gathering will be Thursday, January 7th at 6:30 pm at the home of Dave and Marcia Johnson, 305 S. Segoe Rd. Please call Dave and Marcia at 441-0271 for directions, or Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382 for more information.

Green Committee News

Your Green Sanctuary Committee will be inaugurating a 6 week course on "Menus for the Future." This is one of a series of courses offered by the Northwest Earth Institute. The courses are directed and led by the participants and consist of readings from a course book with the meetings consisting of discussions of the questions listed in the readings. There is no "leader". Participants take turns chairing the meetings. Each participant, or couple if you wish, needs to buy a course book. The cost is about \$20.00. Groups usually consist of 8 to 10 people. The groups decide when, where, and how often they will meet and how long the meetings will last. The final meeting is a feast, either a potluck or restaurant meal.



Marcia and I will be facilitating the course (or courses, if there are enough people interested.) A time and place will be announced later, but it will start shortly after the holidays. For more information, contact Marcia or me or any member of the Green Sanctuary Committee. Our e-mail is pinefarm@uniontel.net.

Dave Johnson, Green Committee member

Movie Group

The movie group is taking a break, and will likely resume in the spring. If you have suggestions for movies, please contact Al Nettleton at [aanett\(at\)execpc.com](mailto:aanett(at)execpc.com) or 238-6053.

Social Action News

News From No More Deaths

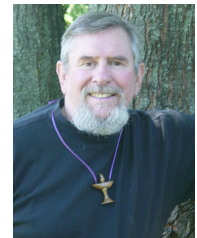
Our Social Action Chair, Mary Somers, is wintering in Tucson, where Walt Staton, a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson and the humanitarian organization No More Deaths, has been found guilty of littering for leaving bottles of water at the US-Mexico border. Mary will be attending his sentencing hearing on Monday, December 21st as a member of the press. For more information about the case and the No More Deaths organization, please visit their website, <http://nomoredeaths.org/>.

Mary Somers
Social Action Chair

Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

This past heavy snowfall (eighteen inches in our backyard in Stoughton) brought, at least for me, a mixture of challenging snow removal and risky driving conditions but also filled my eyes with the visual brilliance of all-dressed-up evergreens and the blinding whiteness of the open fields that form the landscape on the farms around our home. Such a strange result, producing a mixture of aching muscles and amazingly beautiful scenes for the senses. No mighty epiphany occurred but a few simple glimpses of nature's joy and beauty. Wordsworth captures some of the meaning of this for me in these words from "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" -

...For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things..."



During this holiday season, as Unitarian Universalists, we draw on many sources of meaning to make sense of this time in our lives. Some would call this a season for epiphanies. It may be a time, as Wordsworth frames it, when one can feel "a presence that disturbs with the joy of elevated thoughts". You may be one who is asking, "Come on Ralph, what's this stuff about "elevated thoughts?" " Here's what another Ralph would urge you to do: "Hitch your wagon to a star," (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Hitch your wagon to a star, whatever the cost in comfort may be. If you resonate to this advice -- if you really yearn to see things as they are, and yourself as you are, if you long for a glimpse of "a sense sublime, Of something far more deeply interfused," you must be alert and pay attention. That's really the only requirement. Although it's not guaranteed to enlighten you, all experience suggests that it's necessary if you want to be enlightened.

Don't be too busy for an epiphany. But the good news is that you don't need to leave what you're doing. Wherever you are, whoever you are, whatever's happening in your life, is more than sufficient focus for your attention.



My good friend and mentor Dr. Patrick T. A. O'Neill, the minister at the First Unitarian Congregational Society, Brooklyn, NY, invites us to ponder deeply these words: "Here's to epiphanies great and small whenever they occur. A blessing on all Wise Men and Women, East and West. Here's to the stargazers and pilgrims everywhere, who are still foolish enough and brave enough to follow their stars, who travel by night, who bestow their uncommon gifts on us all."

And for this New Year 2010, my wish for the Prairie community is that we continue to aspire to be like those stargazers and pilgrims everywhere, foolish and brave enough to follow our stars, and strive to share our gifts on all whose needs are still unmet.

Glad to be stargazing with you,
Ralph

UU Community News

Charlie Clements to visit Madison

Charlie Clements, the president of the UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee,) will be in Madison at First Society the weekend of March 6-7, 2009. You are invited to attend the events of that weekend; more details will follow.

Bayside Unitarian Universalist Family Camp

Mark your calendars now for Bayside UU Family Camp, July 11-17, 2010, at Wesley Woods Conference Center, Williams Bay, Wisconsin. See the camp website at www.yahoodrummers.com/bayside/ or talk to Jill Delisle at 238-5536 for more information.



Prairie UU Society
2010 Whenona Dr.
Madison, WI 53711
608-271-8218