



Prairie Fire

March 22, 2010

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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

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Calendar

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood. Topic is A Report Card for President Obama.

Sunday, March 28, 2010

8:45 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am – service- "Commitment and the Spiritual Quest", presented by Ian Riddell.

11:45 am - Book Club meets to discuss Remarkable Creatures: Epic Adventures in the Search for the Origins of Species by Sean Carroll.

Thursday, April 1, 2010 Prairie Fire Bulletin items due.

Sunday, April 4, 2010

8:45 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am – service- "Celebrating Renewal," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

6:00 pm - Adult Ed committee meeting.

Saturday, April 10, 2010 - Museum Trip to Chicago with Pat Watkins.

Sunday, April 11, 2010

8:45 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am – service- "Who Is My Neighbor," Presented by Jim Jaeger, UU minister in training.

Thursday, April 15, 2010 - Prairie Fire Bulletin items due.

Saturday, April 17, 2010 - 5:00 pm - Spring Fling RE event!

Sunday, April 18, 2010

8:45 am - Choir Rehearsal.

9:00 am - RE committee meeting.

10:00 am – service- "Breaking Ground - Planting Seeds" (working title), presented by Robert Pierce.

11:45 am - Prairie Board meeting; potluck at 11:45, meeting begins upstairs at noon.

11:45 am - Humanist Union meets; potluck at 11:45, program downstairs at 12:30.

Sunday, April 25, 2010

8:45 am - Choir Rehearsal.

10:00 am – service - Prairie High Schoolers will present on their trip to Boston.

Sunday, May 16, 2010

Spring Parish Meeting

Upcoming Programs

Sunday, March 28, 2010, 10:00 am: "Commitment and the Spiritual Quest", presented by Ian Riddell, UU minister in training. We take inspiration from many sources. Scripture, songs, poetry, and stories give us glimpses into the world and our place in it. Join us as we share the Bantu tale "The Name of the Tree" and explore what it tells us about commitment, history, and the spiritual quest. Ian W. Riddell is a Minister-in-Formation, Meadville-Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL.

Sunday, April 4, 2010, 10:00am: "Celebrating Renewal," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski. Today I will be exploring the many messages and meanings associated with renewal, rebirth, revitalization. I will rely on such poets as Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry, Longfellow, and Szyborska to elevate our understanding and appreciation for considering this Easter as a Unitarian Easter. A challenging topic for those of us who consider ourselves "Paddling against the stream!" in our religious orientation.

Sunday, April 11, 2010, 10:00 am - "Who Is My Neighbor," Presented by Jim Jaeger, UU minister in training. As the health care debate progresses, we hear a lot about insurance exchanges, public options, "death panels" and the like. In all of this focus on the details the broader issues of morality and health care policy are lost in the noise. Jim Jaeger, seminary student at Meadville Lombard Theological Seminary and long time member of First Unitarian Society will talk about the moral and ethical debate the must underly our public conversation about health care reform.

Sunday, April 18, 2010, 10:00 am - "Breaking Ground - Planting Seeds" (working title), presented by Robert Pierce. Robert Pierce, market manager of the South Madison Farmer's Market, will be with us to celebrate Earth Day. He was born and raised on Madison's South side and as the owner of Half the 40 Acres, he has been growing and selling produce for over 20 years. Robert started as a vendor at the South Madison Farmers Market in 2002 and has been the Market Manager since 2003. He is a community leader and advocate in the development of sustainable locally grown food systems.

Religious Education News

Finally, Spring is almost here! Isn't it just lovely waking up to birds chirping in the morning? I love seeing my flowers bursting through the soil. Last week my little yellow crocuses popped up and the daffodils are on their way.

Soon the butterflies will be out and about. It's a good thing we'll be working on Prairie's new butterfly garden this Sunday. If you have a little one in RE please make sure he or she is dressed appropriately for the weather. We're hoping the sun will be shining so we can work in the garden. Students have been learning about the life cycle of plants and butterflies and have made signs for the garden. They sure are working hard on this garden. It's going to be a beautiful gift to Prairie and to the neighborhood.

The high school class is getting ready for their trip to Boston as part of their Coming of Age program. Barb Park has really committed a lot of her valuable time and energy into teaching our young people about the history of Unitarianism, Universalism and different forms of spirituality. Students will leave Saturday, March 27, and stay until Wednesday, March 31st. They will take a historical walk through Boston to see famous UU sites, stay at the Eliot & Pickett Houses (the UUA's B&B), get a tour of the UUA, have a meeting with the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and visit

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.



several UU congregations. It'll be informative and fun! On April 25th we'll all get a chance to hear about this trip when they do the Sunday service presentation titled, "The Boston Pilgrimage".

I'd like to thank everyone who took part in last week's Mystery Friends party. We had 15 children and 15 adults take part in the month long event. We had a lot of people correct in guessing who their Mystery Friend was and we had a few surprises. During the potluck party everyone sat with their friend and got to know them a little better. I hope the friendships made last month will be around for a very long time. I'm glad that some of our adult members had a chance to see what I see every week, a wonderful group of bright, caring students who are really a lot of fun and a joy to be around.

If you were at the March 7th RE presentation, "Famous UU's You Should Know", then you saw firsthand the work that is being done in RE. Our young people are learning our principles not just memorizing them but really knowing why these beliefs are important. They're also learning about famous people who shaped our beliefs and make us proud to say we're UU's.

I'd like to thank all of our teachers for working so hard this year: Paula Pachciarz, Patty Stockdale, Marcia Johnson, Dan Proud, Mary Frantz, RE Chair Robin Proud, and Barb Park. I'd also like to thank Anne Pryor and Bob Cape for assisting Barb in the high school class and thank Anne Urbanski for co-teaching the middle school class last semester. Thank you! Thank you!

If you'd like to help in RE but don't know how, or don't have a lot of time there's still many ways you can make a difference in the lives of our young people. The RE Committee meets every other week at 9 a.m. We also need people to hold our littlest UU's in the nursery and our preschool teachers often need an extra set of hands to help. For more ways please see me or Robin Proud.

As always, see you on Sunday,

Rebecca Malke
Director of Religious Education

Our Society

Prairie Book Club Announces Selections

The Prairie UU Book Club meets once a month after service to discuss a book of interest. Books are discussed over potluck lunch, and you do not need to have finished (or read!) the book to attend. Following below is a list of the books the group will be discussing from March through July of 2010. For more information, contact Mary Mullen, 608-298-0843 or [mmullen\(at\)chorus.net](mailto:mmullen(at)chorus.net).

Sunday, March 28 – Remarkable Creatures: Epic Adventures in the Search for the Origins of Species by Sean Carroll. (nonfiction, 352 pages) "Tells the stories of the most dramatic expeditions and important discoveries in two centuries of natural history — from the epic journeys of pioneering naturalists to the breakthroughs making headlines today — and how they inspired and have expanded one of the greatest ideas of modern science: evolution." Recommended by Galen Smith.

Sunday, April 25 – The Gate to Women's Country by Sheri Tepper (post-apocalyptic novel, 320 pages) - Set in the future many generations after a nuclear war, the story focuses on a matriarchal nation, Women's Country, where young boys are given up at age 5 to live in garrisons with men and at age 15 decide whether to continue to be warriors or to give up that life and live in Women's Country with the women, young children, and men who have renounced garrison life. Read this novel for the themes of ecofeminism and ecotopian fiction, for the mystery of how such a divided society can even survive, or for a science fiction look at how catastrophic wars can be avoided. Parts of this novel may make you angry, but they will still make you think. Suggested by Mary Mullen.

Sunday, May 30 - [A Tree Grows in Brooklyn](#) by Betty Smith (fiction, 528 pages) – Rarely does the book club read a “classic.” This month’s book is an exception. First published in 1943, it is a *bildungsroman* or coming of age story. The novel takes place in the first 2 decades of the 1900s in Brooklyn, NY and follows Francie Nolan and her 3-generation Austrian/Irish-American family who are struggling against poverty. The main metaphor of the book is the Tree of Heaven, an Asian import now considered invasive that is common in vacant lots in New York City. Suggested by Barbara Park.

Sunday, June 27 - [Elegance of the Hedgehog](#) by Muriel Barbery (French fiction, 320 pages) Told through 2 narrators – *concierge* Renée Michel (in first person) and an intellectually precocious girl named Paloma Josse, (through her journals) - it features erudite characters. It is full of allusions to literary works, music, films, and paintings. Themes relate to philosophy, class consciousness, and personal conflict. Suggested by Rose Smith and Al Nettleton.

Sunday, July 18 - (Date may be changed) [Roads to Quoz: An American Mosey](#) by William Least Heat-Moon (608 pages) is about a series of short trips – total of 16,000 miles - rather than one long trip as Heat-Moon’s other books were. In this book he covers Maine’s North Woods by car, a trip along the coast from Baltimore to Florida by boat, one in Idaho’s Bitterroot Mountains by rail bike (bike fitted out to cruise along abandoned railroad tracks), and others. “Wherever he is, Heat-Moon’s thought is often tethered to questions of sustainability and equitability...deep ecology.” It’s a long book, and you may choose to read it over the summer while on a trip or while trapped at home. Feel free to select whatever trips appeal to you. Suggested by Al Nettleton.

WOW to Meet April 3rd

Prairie's Women's group, also known as WOW, meets monthly for breakfast potluck and conversation and an occasional project. We will meet next on Saturday, April 3rd, at 9:00 am. Come and join us for great food and conversation.

Prairie Elders meetings

Prairie Elders is a group of over-65 Prairie members who meet once a month (generally on the 4th Tuesday of the month) and Oakwood, in the Nakoma room, for conversation and mutual support. New members are always welcome. Topics alternate between general interest and more personal items. The topic for March 23rd is "A Report Card for President Obama." For April 27th the topic is "Something you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask." Afraid of feeling stupid? Topic too grand? No way. Such a topic spurs fascinating discussions in our loquacious bunch. Our “round robin” format makes it easier to hear and gives all the option of speaking. Topics alternate between general issues and personal interests. NOTE: *Please bring suggestions for future topics.*

All meetings begin with informal conversation at 1:30 pm, followed by discussion beginning at 2:00 pm. If possible, please bring some snacks to share and your own beverage cup. For more information about the group or to arrange a ride, please call one of the following: Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Gordon Cunningham 230-3367, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

Humanist Union to Discuss Outreach with Jane Esbensen

On April 18 the Humanist Union will meet with humanist UU minister Jane Esbensen to discuss humanist outreach ideas. Jane is currently serving as half-time consulting minister to the Lake Country Unitarian Universalist Church in Hartland WI. We are departing from our usual practice of meeting on the first Sunday of the month because the 18th was the only Sunday in April when Jane was available for our usual potluck lunch at 11:45 am and our presentation/discussion from 12:30 to 1:30 pm. Since the Prairie Board will be having a potluck and meeting upstairs during this time, we will share their potluck serving table but take our food downstairs and meet there. In May we will return to our first Sunday schedule for our May 2nd meeting with Andrew Kerr, Speaker of the Free Congregation of Sauk County.

Mark Your Calendars!

- The [Spring Parish meeting](#) has been scheduled for [Sunday, May 16th](#), after the service. We will begin with a potluck lunch at 11:45 and begin the meeting at noon. At this annual meeting, the budget will be presented for the congregation's approval, and new board members and officers will be elected. Materials for the meeting will be distributed beforehand via Prairie News or US mail.

- Prairie's annual fall retreat has been scheduled for the weekend of September 17 - 19, 2010, at the Pine Lake Camp in Westfield, Wisconsin. This is the same location we used last year, and we are hopeful that the earlier date will bring us both warmer weather for enjoying all the camp has to offer, and the possibility that the folks at Sauk City UU will be able to join us this year. Every year the retreat is run with tremendous volunteer support. People are always needed to coordinate programs, help with publicity and registration, help with childcare, and more. If you are interested in volunteering to work on the retreat, please contact Kate Liu, Prairie's administrator, at 271-8218 & admin(at)uuprairie.org.

Plans for Professional Ministry

By now you are likely aware that our minister of the past 3-1/2 years, Ralph Tyksinski, will be retiring from professional ministry at the end of his term with us, on June 30, 2010. There are several steps we need to take to obtain a new consulting minister, and the process is already well underway. We need to submit a "Congregational Record" to the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) to serve as our ad and invitation for any ministers who might be interested in serving us. The Board discussed what we need from a consulting minister at this time, and got additional ideas from the Long Range Planning Committee and the Committee on Ministry. A small group of Board members wrote a draft of the report, which was then approved by the full Board at its 3/14/10 meeting. We will be working with our Central Midwest District Ministerial Settlement Representative, who will help us through the process. We need to appoint a consulting minister task force, whose role will be to help us reach the point of selecting a candidate to present to us. We are planning for the new minister to start August 1st.

Do you have the time, energy, and desire to help us find our next minister? It will be time consuming, but rewarding. Please let me know right away, because we want our task force up and running. It should be a fascinating and exciting process.

Rachel Long, President

Vote on Settled Ministry to be Delayed

Throughout this congregational year, Prairie has been undergoing a discussion regarding ministerial relationships: learning what settled, consulting, interim, and lay ministry mean, and how Prairie's future might be fostered by different types of ministerial arrangements. This discussion was begun at the direction of the Prairie UU Society Board, which charged the Long-Range Planning Committee in July to facilitate the process. This request was intended as preparation for a congregational vote at the Spring Parish Meeting on whether Prairie should pursue "settled" ministry (that is, long-term, rather than year-to-year contract ministry).

In undertaking this process, both the Long-Range Planning Committee and Prairie members have conducted much important work. Progress has been made on many fronts. We have interviewed members of several other congregations who have undergone similar discussions. Outside speakers have come to Prairie to share their thoughts during or after Sunday services, including Ian Evison from the Central Midwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association and Glenda Consenza of the Dekalb UU Society, which recently called a settled minister. Prairie members have had opportunities to explore and discuss the issue at three workshops, one-on-one interviews, and other events. The Committee has shared information through four Prairie Fire articles, numerous group e-mails, verbal announcements, congregational mailings, and individual emails and phone calls. A question-and-answer session about lay leadership with Andrew Kerr, Speaker of the Free Congregation of Sauk County, was rescheduled due to a death in his family but will take place on May 2.

Throughout this process, members have provided feedback in verbal and written form, and "readiness polls" have been taken in which respondents indicated their preparedness to cast a vote ("1" being "not at all ready", "5" being "I could vote today if needed"). Three trends have become evident:

- 1) The readiness polls indicate that the majority of respondents are not ready to vote, with average response ratings ranging from 3 to 3.67.
- 2) A majority of the membership is not fully engaged in the discussion. Fewer than 25% of members have attended a workshop on the topic, and follow-up contacts with those unable to attend echo a lack of preparedness to move forward in decision-making.
- 3) The feedback from those who have attended raises important but complex issues, many of which are

beyond the scope of what can reasonably be resolved between now and the Spring Parish Meeting. Examples include questions about ideological identity (including theological diversity) within the congregation and how different ministry forms would affect or reflect it; the impact of different ministry formats on leadership; and financial wherewithal to support a settled minister.

After reviewing both level of participation and feedback received thus far, the Long-Range Planning Committee recommended to the Board that the vote be delayed, and the Board has accepted this recommendation. Discussions will continue in the future; however, at present the Committee will be shifting into a “reporting” mode, to allow time to present all the findings and information that has been gathered. This will ensure that the work done this year by members of the congregation on this issue is fully documented. The Committee will also make recommendations regarding means of facilitating future discussions.

With such an important issue, full participation and thoroughly resolved discussions are critical. To move forward with a vote when there is clearly more work to be done would not be in the best interest of the congregation.

Additional feedback is encouraged; please contact any member of the Long-Range Planning Committee (Robyn Perrin, Aileen Nettleton, Ken Skog, Christina Klock, and Mary Mullen). Many thanks for your time and effort on this issue. It is important, and the discussion process will continue in the future.

Robyn M. Perrin, Chair, Long-Range Planning Committee

Caring Committee Guidelines for Support for Prairie Members

The Caring Committee commits to reach out to members in times of crisis to plan with the individual or family for ways they would like support from the committee and congregation. Discussions will be confidential. Information about the individual’s status will not be communicated beyond the Caring Committee and minister via email or other announcements unless the individual agrees information may be shared in order to respect the individual’s right to privacy. The Caring Committee contact person may coordinate support with other members of the congregation, if needed and if the individual agrees. The committee will work in cooperation with the individual’s family and the minister to address members’ needs. The committee will do what is appropriate and feasible, given our time limits as volunteers. It does not take the place of professional counseling or other services.

The Caring Committee will offer to help members during times of illness, life crisis or major transition in these ways:

- Call, email or send a card when a person is ill, check to see if meals, groceries, ride to doctor are needed/ desired.
- Contact person or family when person is in the hospital to see what the person would like: visits, family meals, pet care, transportation, etc.
- Contact family at time of child’s birth to offer support for food or respite care.
- Contact young families to see if respite care is needed in special situations.
- Contact person prior to planned surgery to see if person would like hospital visits, meals after home, post-op visits.
- Contact person to share bereavement when family member or good friend passes away.
- Share with a member about life issues in their family such as an aging parent.
- Offer respite care for individual with long-term ill spouse/partner.
- Provide support at the time of death in the immediate family, such as bereavement visits and meals.
- Discuss end-of-life issues for the individual/ parents/ family member (Refer to Final Chapters booklet)

Contact the minister (or community services, if appropriate):

- Contact minister when individual has illness; minister may visit in hospital
- Pastoral counseling
- Mental health needs
- Rites of passage: child dedications, marriages, memorial services
- Professional counseling

Support for “Friends” of Prairie
Concerns related to interpersonal relationships
Concerns with end-of-life issues
Bereavement
Financial emergency needs

Individuals are encouraged to request assistance yourself in other situations from other members of the congregation or community resources. The Caring Committee may be able to suggest appropriate community resources or private paid services to the individual:

- Requests for assistance in moving
- Regular rides to doctor appointments
- Long term need for shopping (grocery store delivery, pharmacy delivery)
- Home assistance such as cleaning, laundry
- Snow shoveling, other home care tasks
- Rides to Prairie events

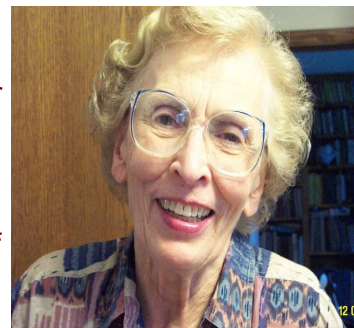
Please contact one of the Caring Committee, Aileen Nettleton, Randy Converse, Linda Colletti, Linda Sheehy, Jill Cornejo, or Erin Bosch, or Rev. Ralph Tyksinski if you have an illness, death, or major crisis in your family, or if you hear about another Prairie member in need. We will do our best as volunteers to be there when most needed. We appreciate all the support that the Prairie Community as a whole provides to one another in our “ministry” of caring for each other.

Aileen Nettleton, Chair, Caring Committee

In Memoriam: Mary Lou Diehl

Mary Lou Diehl passed away March 13, 2010, at age 89, following a massive stroke. Her children were with her at the hospital at the time of her death. A memorial service is being planned for June. Cards may be sent to the family at her home as listed in the Prairie Directory.

Mary Lou was one of our early members of Prairie, having joined in 1969. She will be remembered for her strong activism and sense of justice in society. Professionally, she had worked in public relations at MATC. She was very proud of the achievements of her three children, John, Alicia, and Tim, and her grandchildren.



Social Action Notes

Mary Somers, chair of the Prairie Social Action Committee, will receive a certificate of award as a UU Humanitarian from the UU Church of Tucson along with 14 others for their work with the church's ministry of NO MORE DEATHS. No More Deaths provides humanitarian aid in the desert for those crossing the border. The awards will be given on March 28th at a special service given by John Pike, founder of both the sanctuary movement and No More Deaths.

Prairie member Nancy Graham, also in Tucson, brought the play, SEVEN JEWISH CHILDREN to the Tucson Northwest UU Church March 14th, and plans to have several other performances at area churches.

In the Madison Area, the The Single Payer Action Network of Madison will present James Thindwa at the Labor Temple on April 10 at 2 p.m. James was featured on Bill Moyers Journal last year and has been a guest on the Health Writers program on several occasions.

Mary Somers
Social Action Chair

Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

Dear Prairie members and friends,

My decision to conclude my service as Consulting Minister has been made. It has not been easy and uncomplicated. But I feel that it is now time for Prairie to journey with another minister and the Board is now actively engaged in the search process. Since I began my service in October of 2006 (I remember well attending the parish retreat at Bethel Horizons and participating with Karleen in our first Key Log service, indoors because of the rain outside,) we have journeyed along a path that has surely developed reasonable expectations of what shared ministry can mean. I have felt deeply privileged to serve and have loved my time with Prairie. We should honor and own the achievements that we have accomplished together and I strongly believe have demonstrably enriched the life of the congregation and have made it a healthier community.

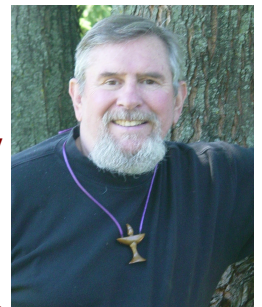
However, along with achievements there are for me some disappointments. The excellent work that has been done by the Long Range Planning Committee has not yet yielded the kinds of consensus building around the congregation's readiness to make a decision to go forward with the longer term service of professional ministry.

The Committee recommended to the Board at the March 14th meeting the following: "That Prairie UU Society delay the vote on whether to pursue settled ministry, originally scheduled for the 2010 Spring Parish Meeting." The LRP committee also recommended to the Board "that different models of professional and lay ministry models continue to be explored and discussed during the 2010-2011 congregational year." Both recommendations were accepted by the Board.

I would like to suggest that Prairie is not alone among congregations in its struggle to find an identity with professional ministry.

Here is a framework that Alban Institute consultant Roy Oswald recommends to congregations as a way to move beyond polarity thinking and divisiveness and toward greater consensus building.

"A polarity is a pair of truths that need each other over time. When an argument is about two poles of a polarity, both sides are right and need each other to experience the whole truth. This phenomenon has been recognized and written about for centuries in philosophy and religion, and the research is clear: leaders and organizations that manage polarities well outperform those who don't. A polarity is a pair of truths that are interdependent. Neither truth stands alone. They complement each other. Congregations often find themselves in power struggles over the two poles of a polarity. Both sides believe strongly that they are right. People on each side assume that if they are right, their opponents must be wrong—classic "either/or" thinking. Either we are right or they are right—and we know we are right! When people argue about the two truths, both sides will be right, and they will need each other to experience the whole truth."



Let's take a look at each quadrant in the "Strong Clergy Leadership and Strong Lay Leadership" polarity in detail:

The Upside of Strong Clergy Leadership

Clergy possess theological and spiritual depth and draw on those gifts to lead the congregation well
Clergy possess enough emotional intelligence to develop strong, trusting relationships with others
Congregations are well served by clergy who know how to maintain balance in their lives
Excellent pastoral care is offered
Congregations thrive when clergy lead congregational change
Strong prophetic messages are delivered when necessary

The Upside of Strong Lay Leadership

Clergy and laity share a set of commonly accepted set of principles that can result in strong mission and vision
Some laity understand the complexity of the clergy's role and support and guide their minister's work in the congregation

Gifted and called laity also offer pastoral care
Positive change takes place in a congregation when strong lay leaders are involved
Dedicated lay leaders participate with their minister in challenging the congregation

The Downside of Strong Clergy Leadership

Some laity may feel inferior to ministers in their knowledge of religion, philosophy and congregational life
Clergy may try to micromanage other staff members and lay leaders
Overfunctioning clergy may burn out and fall into exhaustion, cynicism, and disillusionment
Lay leaders' energy declines because they lack ownership of important decisions
Clergy are, so to speak, stoned to death like the prophets of old

The Downside of Strong Lay Leadership

Conflict can result when strong lay leaders butt heads with strong clergy, and one side wins
Some laity try to micromanage their clergy
Change is not possible because strong lay leaders insist that things be done the old way
The energy of clergy declines as they lack ownership of important decisions
Clergy are unwilling to deliver strong, prophetic messages

Thriving congregations have found ways to empower their clergy and to empower their laity. It is important to do both. One way is to reproduce this polarity on a single sheet of paper and ask for an hour's discussion at the next board meeting or better, the next congregational meeting. The question that needs to be asked at such a time is this: "Are we managing this polarity well or managing it poorly?" If there is consensus that the congregation is managing it poorly, the board can ask for suggestions of action steps that might bring the two poles into better balance. If the suggestions are not particularly robust, a task force can be appointed to study the polarity and bring recommendations. Managing this polarity is worth that expenditure of energy."

Of course, there will be folks at Prairie with concerns over budgeting, leadership roles, professional responsibilities, duties and tasks. But these are issues that congregations will always face whether with ministers or not.



Glad to be journeying with you,
Rev. Ralph

Denominational News

The **Central MidWest District Meeting** is approaching! It will be held the weekend of **April 30th-May 2nd** at the Westin Chicago North Shore in Wheeling, IL. You still have some time to plan, so mark your calendars!

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"There will be the usual inspiring banner parade, moving worship services and the winner of the sermon award will present their award-winning words as part of the Sunday morning worship. And there will be the important sharing of resources, experiments and successes around the issue of growth that religious leaders are always clamoring for." It is always an uplifting weekend. Brochures will be available at the Prairie meetinghouse starting February 28th.

Also, the UUA **General Assembly** is being held in Minneapolis, this year, **June 23-27th!** We are hoping since it is so close, we can get car loads of Prairie folk to attend! "General Assembly is the way that our faith does business. Actions of social witness are passed at GA, elements that make up future policies are discussed... and YOU have a voice in the discussion. You'll hear terrific speakers. There will be hundreds of entertaining programs and informative workshops, offering excellent support and learning for leaders in our congregations. You'll be able to join the witness for our faith and values, in moving and exciting ways."

Please let Heidi Hughes, DA chairperson, know if you are planning on attending either or both conferences - or if you are interested in being a delegate for either meeting and would like more information.

Heidi Hughes
Denominational Affairs Chair

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UUSC is having a Get Together... and you're invited!

This exciting event will be held on Justice Sunday, March 28, 2010, 4:00 p.m. EST.

Join with others in your congregation and community for a UUSC Get Together about the critical issues facing both white and blue collar workers in today's turbulent economy. Share a meal, discuss The Big Squeeze with New York Times business and economics correspondent and author Steven Greenhouse, and learn ways to reclaim the social contract lost over years of declining job security and vanishing pensions.

Can you Host a Get Together?

Register your Get Together and we will send you a tool kit that will help you promote and organize this event, including flyers, sample e-mails, potluck recipes on a budget, give-aways, lawn signs, and many other items.

Would you like to attend a Get Together?

Connect your local community with Get Togethers across the country and join in the national conversation. UUSC will host a conference call with author Steven Greenhouse. Your Get Together will be able to participate and ask questions of the author!

There are currently Get Togethers planned in 30 communities across 21 states! Please help us reach our goal of having 50 Get Togethers on March 28!

To learn more about this event, please visit our website www.uusc.org/get_together.

Sincerely,
Myrna Greenfield,
Director of Outreach and Mobilization



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