

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – April 2005 News

CORRESPONDENCE

◆Dear Curran, Al, and Members of Open Prairie Church,
I'm pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, the Ministry Team for Authorized Ministry unanimously and enthusiastically voted to recommend the Prairie Association receive Open Prairie Church into full standing at their meeting on April 23, in Rockford, Illinois.

That will be a day of great joy! We'll continue the conversation of how to best mark this event liturgically. Congratulations!

Rich Pleva
Prairie Association Minister
Illinois Conference, UCC
815-758-3497
www.prairieucc.org

◆Dear Friends:
Thanks once again for giving me the opportunity to share my experience in Uganda with you. Here's a brief summary of how things have progressed since last summer. I'd also like to draw your attention to a letter from Peace Corps you may have received outlining a new opportunity for staying involved in Uganda. Your donation from this past summer is referenced under "Statement of Need" in the third paragraph of the project proposal.

PROGRESS REPORT

Along with your church, I met with eight other churches in the Prairie Association. In total almost \$1600 was raised for projects in Uganda. This fund raising effort has advanced three different projects:

1. \$816 was sent to improve 12 classrooms at Ibanda Integrated P/S.

Plaster and paint improve the atmosphere of the classroom and make it much easier for the teacher to display information (tape doesn't stick well to bare bricks). Furthermore, the plaster is an excellent investment because it increases the life of the building. This project is complete. The staff and children send their sincerest thanks for your help in this effort.

2. \$483 was sent to Kisubi Orphan Project (KOP) for school uniforms and on-going expenses of the organization. In my slides, this was the group playing relay games and tug-o-war. KOP is a community-based organization helping care for 200 orphans. Many orphans in the project live with relatives or in child-headed homes. Unfortunately, both situations lead to sub-standard care. KOP attempts to fill the gap between the care the children are getting and what they need. One way they do this is by removing barriers to school attendance. Although schooling is "free" in Uganda, pupils must supply their own uniform and materials to attend. This prevents many orphans from receiving an education. The donation of \$483 will allow at least 50 children to purchase school uniforms. This project is ongoing.

3. The remaining \$260 was set aside for additional work at Ibanda Integrated P/S and made contingent on completion of Phase 1 (painting and plastering). The school is deciding whether they would prefer to use this money for sports equipment or put it towards a resource center (explained below).

NEW OPPORTUNITY

Kelly Genova, my Peace Corps replacement, is working with Ibanda Integrated Primary School on a resource center. Because you have previously helped this school, I suggested she contact

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – April 2005 News

you as part of her fundraising effort. I know all the people involved with this project and can confirm that they are reliable and well motivated. This is an excellent opportunity to help a school provide a valuable service to its community.

I hope you have received a letter directly from Peace Corps on her behalf. If you did not, please let me know, and I will mail you a copy of the letter. You can find out more information about this project at:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/contribute>

Click on "Volunteer Projects" then find "Uganda: K. Genova". This web page describes how to donate by check or credit card. Contributing in this way removes all overhead and transaction fees so 100% of your donation goes to the project.

Finally, many of you will remember pictures of children "smearing" the floors of their classroom with manure to keep insects out. This school now has concrete floors thanks to a project funded through the Peace Corps website. I understand the kids were thrilled by the improvement!

Let me know if I can help communicate with your congregation further about this opportunity.

Sincerely, Paul Pleva

◆Dear Open Prairie Volunteers,
Many thanks to all of you (Patricia, Curran, Katie, Lori, Scott, Creal, Kelly, Becky, Roger, and Susan) for putting on last Saturday's Easter party for children in Gateway's Early Intervention Program.

We were delighted that Patricia approached us several weeks ago with the

offer to organize such an event. We really appreciate the care you took in organizing activities that worked well for the children and their families. There was truly a great spirit of fun and love and celebration.

On behalf of Sarah Westerman, our Developmental Therapist (who brought her Great Pyrenees dog to the occasion), Lesley Gonigam, our Faith in Action Coordinator, and myself, thanks to all of you from all of us at Gateway. The photos I took (some of which I've sent to the media) and the photos you took (on display at your Easter service at Pilgrim Park) provide a glimpse into the joyfulness of the occasion.

Please extend our gratitude to all the Open Prairie volunteers who participated. You truly put faith into action.

Sincerely,
Sarah Cooper
Director of Development and Public Relations

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

4/01	John Zearing
4/05	Fern Webber
4/08	Lynette Ivey Trishia Pettee
4/10	Cherie Martin
4/17	Sasha Ernst David Hornbaker
4/18	Sheridan Ernst
4/19	Creal Zearing
4/24	Joe Waterhouse Dana Collins

Note: if you have any additions or corrections, please let Marcie know at the church office.

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – April 2005 News

MUSIC/THEATER NEWS

I am performing Faure's Requiem with the Handel Oratorio Society on Saturday, April 16, at 8:00 pm. The performance will be held in Centennial Hall, Augustana College, and tickets will cost about \$12. An organ concerto is also on the program. Anyone interested in tickets can email me at nicole-kromphardt@augustana.edu, and I can help him or her get tickets.

My play, Five Love Stories, was one of the five winners of this year's Quad City Playwrights Festival. My prize is that it will be performed on Sunday, May 8, at 7:30 in Wallenberg Hall here at Augustana. All five winning plays will be performed that night, and there will be a reception afterwards. The event is free, and anyone who is interested is invited.

Thanks,
Nikki Kromphardt

FEB 2005 TREASURER'S REPORT

General Operating Fund

Income:

Pledges	\$ 7,712.00
Contributions	\$ 661.00
Interest	\$ 179.21
Ill Conf Grant	<u>\$ 5,000.00</u>
TOTAL	\$13,552.21

Expenses: \$ 5,420.56

OCWM INCOME	\$ 125.00	Tsunami Relief
	\$ 210.00	Pledges
	\$ 25.00	Contribs
	\$ 203.00	Freedom House

Building Income \$6,100.00

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Small Groups

After a wonderful three-week session exploring the theme of loneliness in scripture, I am pleased to offer three more small group opportunities. All groups will meet on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm at the Pastor's place.

May 11, 18, 25 the focus is "Vengeance is Mine," a prayerful and scriptural exploration of vengeance and the human desire to seek revenge.

August 10, 17, 24 the focus is on "Gentleness," we will explore this important scriptural concept and how understanding it might better connect us to God and to one another.

October 12, 19, 26 topic TBA but go ahead and mark the dates in your calendars.

Making time to engage in intentional exploration of spiritual matters is one very important way Open Prairie will continue to grow a healthy and happy community from the inside out. I strongly encourage you to make time to participate in one or all of these small group opportunities.

May God continue to bless each of us with insight and the capacity to grow,
Rev. Curran Reichert

SUPPORT GROUP

Bureau Valley Area Hospice offers a Grief and Loss Support Group each 3rd Tuesday of the month at 2:30 pm at the chapel in Perry Memorial Hospital. For more information, please call 815-876-3375.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Thoughts on Resurrection

Greetings in the name of the risen Christ who inspires all things to new life. In worship, through prayer and in small groups, assisted by Joyce Rupp's book "The Cup of Our Life," Open Prairie has been exploring many aspects of dying to old ways of being and looking at embracing life in new and healthier ways.

I rejoice with you that in the current liturgical season, Christ has been resurrected from the dead to continue his ministry among the living. But I also recognize that even though things are looking up, Spring is just around the corner and Christ is no longer in the tomb, some of our us are still having trouble getting free from the pain in our lives that keeps us bound up like Lazarus.

Rupp's advice on that front has been for us that "the healing of our spirits will come when we let go of the past, (when we) stop trying to have things be as they used to be, get on with our lives and tend to what is before us." We are learning as a community how to see and accept ourselves as the "chipped cup." We are learning how to revision the inner chips, cracks and even breaks that make us who we are. We are recognizing that breathing new life into the dead places in our lives doesn't always mean being able to repair the breaks. Sometimes it means we heal the best we are able to heal and must be willing to move forward with a metaphoric or real physical limp, ever mindful of the new things God is doing through us.

Many of us are in the process of resurrecting our faith, recreating our spiritual disciplines, reassessing our relationship to the church and religion in general. These are important and often difficult steps along the journey. The good news is, that we are in this together. We as a congregation are peeling back the layers of what was, and what might have been, to discover what is, and what will be. I am committed to walking with you on this new and

exciting path, but I warn you-it is risky. Letting go of belief structures that no longer serve, healing past hurts, embracing the new things God is doing in and around us, these are unpredictable endeavors. Our lives may look radically different on the other end, our newfound voices might challenge others, spiritual freedom is still for many uncharted territory. So beware this is marvelous and dangerous work that we are about.

As we move closer to owning our own building, as we continue to discern who we are as Christians in Princeton Illinois and beyond, let us be ever mindful that death and resurrection coexist in our tradition. Let us be ever aware that people are in different places on the spectrum of healing, wholeness, and belief. Therefore, let us strive to move forward not as fragments but as a whole, complex and wondrous people of God, making room for both those whose voices are found and for those who have only begun to look. These are exciting times... these are resurrection times.

May God continue to bless us on the journey together, Rev. Curran Reichert

If you were not one of the twenty some people who purchased the book, "The Cup of Our Life" I highly recommend getting your hands on a copy. (Available at Green River Books or online at Amazon.com) If you were among those who purchased the book but were unable, for whatever reason, to participate in the exercises and discussion group, you will have another chance. And lastly if you purchased the book and participated in the discussion group but were so moved the whole process as to want to go through it all again-there is good news for you, too. The Cup Book Group will begin meeting again on April 17, following worship. The group will continue to meet through the 29th of May. All are welcome to participate for any or all of the discussions.

MISSION TEAM

Greetings from the Mission Team,

March has been a great month for mission and outreach. I hope you are all listening to National Public Radio because our Open Prairie message is playing six days a week rotating once throughout the programming day. NPR (FM 89.5, FM 91.3) began running the ad March 14th and will continue to do so through May 29th. However, the Mission and Fellowship Teams will host a luncheon on April 10 after church to raise money to keep the NPR spot on the air and perhaps increase our air time.

Open Prairie hosted its first Easter party for Gateway children aged 0-3 and their brothers and sisters. Many thanks to Mission Team's newest member, Pat Wilson for coordinating with Gateway and planning the event. And a big thank you to Lori Pettee, Roger and Becky Perkins, Scott Roberts, Susan Hale, Creal Zearing, and Curran and Katie for helping make this such a special day for these kids. You should have seen Roger bowling for bunnies! A good time was had by all.

Open Prairie will be featured in the Chamber of Commerce's Relocation brochure coming out next month. The ad will include our beautiful clasped hands logo and information about how wonderful and progressive we are. Our presence on the Chamber's web site is now updated with the same information as our own Open Prairie home page.

Summer is coming! Yes, it is. I heard those doubting groans. And summer means, besides the warm weather I promised Curran and Katie existed year round in Illinois, VEGETABLES. Delicious,

organic, locally grown produce right at your fingertips. Coneflower Farms will be signing up folks to receive a weekly box of yummy vegetables throughout the summer. I will be talking this up the next few Sundays and there will be information available at coffee hour. If you would like to sign up or have your questions answered about community sponsored agriculture give me a call at 876-1106.

The food pantry would like us to collect pancake mix and syrup for the month of April.

Peace, Kelly

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

Pizza Hut will donate 15% of lunch and dinner sales to Open Prairie for the first Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each month from November 2004-May 2005. Mark your calendar for APRIL 4th, 5th, and 6th and eat pizza!! Coupons are available at church on Sunday mornings.

The Fellowship Team challenges everyone to *PACK THE PLACE* at Pizza Hut on Wednesday, April 6th at 5:30 p.m. Bring your friends, neighbors and family!

On Sunday, April 10, we are planning on having a luncheon after the service in celebration of Rev. Jorge Morales who will be joining us at worship. Everyone should be "expecting" a phone call asking them to bring one small thing to help out. We will need everyone's help!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

As most of you know, in April we will be trying out a new model for Team meetings. Instead of having meetings four Tuesday nights of the month, all teams will meet together once a month for two hours. The first Group Team Meeting will occur on April 19 (as opposed to the previously scheduled April 12). In May and in the months to follow, the Group Team meetings will occur on the second Tuesday of the month -- with the exception of July which is a Sabbath month. I do hope this adjustment will not inconvenience any one and look forward to seeing all the teams represented on April 19th from 7-9pm.

Thanks, Rev. Reichert

Spiritual health is a high priority for Open Prairie, recognizing that Sabbath Time is an intrinsic part of spiritual well-being, during the month of July OPUCC will be taking a break from publishing the newsletter and holding Group Team and Council meetings. We want to honor those who give so much to OPUCC throughout the year and offer everyone a chance to rest and renew so that we can come back rejuvenated in August.

Blessings, Rev. Reichert

PILGRIM PARK FUN

The Outdoor Ministries Play Day is scheduled for Sunday, April 10th at Pilgrim Park from 2-6 p.m. This is a great opportunity to play outdoors and to discover what Pilgrim Park has to offer!. There will be games, snacks, hayrack rides, paddle boating, walking tours of the camp and even the high ropes course!.

1ST ANNUAL RUMMAGE SALE AT PILGRIM PARK on MAY 6TH & 7TH

All proceeds will be used to help fund the summer camping program at Pilgrim Park Camp, including purchasing program supplies and helping to scholarship campers.

Donations for the sale will be accepted at the camp November 15, 2004 through April 15, 2005. All donations of gently used items for the rummage sale will be accepted including, but not limited to household items, furniture, toys, games, kitchen supplies, clothing and other miscellaneous items. If you are unable to get the items to the camp, please contact the camp at 815-447-2390 and a staff member will arrange for a pick-up to be made.

ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

The 13th Annual Meeting of the Prairie Association of the Illinois Conference will be held Saturday, April 23. We will be hosted by 2nd Congregational UCC of Rockford.

The speaker at our meeting will be Christopher Grundy speaking on Semper Reformanda and Hebrews 13:8: Why Worship and Its Music Must Change – and Stay the Same”. We will sing, argue(maybe), laugh, and discuss our way through some issues of so-called contemporary worship and particularly its music.

Reservation forms (due by April 15) for the meeting are available at church on Sunday mornings. Please speak to Rev. Reichert for more information.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE

SITUATION: The 8.7 magnitude earthquake centered off Sumatra's western coast wreaked wholesale destruction on the island of Nias yesterday (March 28, 2005), leaving anywhere from 300 to 2000 dead and early estimates of at least 25,000 displaced on Nias and other islands in the midst of widespread damage to structures, critical facilities, and lifelines.

Early assessments indicated damages affecting 80% of houses and buildings in Gunungsitoli, the Nias capital. Damaged structures on the island included churches, government facilities, and a hospital which collapsed. The quake totally destroyed the Nias airstrip, compromised two vital bridges connecting Gunungsitoli and outlying areas, triggered fires that burned the two biggest markets in Sitoli, and downed power and telephone lines.

"The stock of food and drinking water is insufficient," CWS partner Yayasan Tanggul Bencana of Communion of Churches in Indonesia (YTB) reports. "Some people in the affected community are starting to drink unpotable water." In addition, CWS partner Yakkum Emergency Unit (YEU) reports with only a few doctors available and limited hospital capacity, "wounded people are not getting appropriate treatment."

RESPONSE: Church World Service (CWS) is coordinating its response with YTB and YEU and with them will be submitting a response proposal through the

Action by Churches Together (ACT) network for the first two-week relief period to cover:

A CWS program encompassing water sanitation and distribution of non-food items. CWS plans to send a water purification unit with a 25,000 liters/hour capacity. It will also distribute 25 boxes of medicines; 1000 units of non-food packages containing blankets, mattresses, clothing; masks and gloves; and 500 tents. A YEU health care program including medicines and medical teams which will be air-transported from Jakarta and Medan

A YTB program encompassing food distribution (rice, baby foods, mineral water, instant noodles), volunteer support (transportation/communication), and counseling towards meeting initial needs of 15,000 internally displaced persons in 10 Nias subdistricts.

Updates to this situation report will be provided, including a possible public appeal to support on-going response to this disaster.

For further information about disasters to which Church World Service is responding -- or to make a credit card contribution -- please visit the Church World Service Website at www.churchworldservice.org or phone (800) 297-1516.

PRAYER GROUP

A weekly contemplative prayer group gathers on Wednesday mornings at 8 am at the home of Hal & Margaret Autrey at 1320 South Church Street. We share a reading or prayer, listen to a Tibetan singing bowl, and meditate in silence for about 20 minutes. We close our group with a circle prayer. All are welcome!

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – April 2005 News

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday Mornings

10:30 am Worship at Prouty Building

4/02	8:30	am	Women's Spring Celebration
4/04	thru	4/06	Pizza Hut Days
4/06	8:00	am	Prayer Group
	5:30	pm	Prairie Circle/Pizza Hut
	7:00	pm	Men's Group
4/07	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
4/08			Sr. High trip to Comedy Sportz
4/10	12:00	pm	Luncheon after worship
	2:00	pm	Outdoor Fun-Pilgrim Park
4/13	8:00	am	Prayer Group
4/14	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
4/17			Sr. High Round Table
4/19	7:00	pm	Church Group Meeting
4/20	8:00	am	Prayer Group
4/21	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
4/23			Prairie Assoc. Meeting
4/24	12:00	pm	Congregational Meeting
4/24	4:00	pm	Art & Music Festival / Potato Bar
4/26	7:00	pm	Church Council Meeting
4/27	8:00	am	Prayer Group
4/28	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
	8:00	pm	Building Team

USHER/GREETER SCHEDULE

April 3	Lori Pettee/Hal Autrey
April 10	Kathy Hornbaker/Lark Fisher
April 17	Daniel Kuhnert/David Wooster
April 24	Ray/Carol Kuhnert

NEW MEMBER SUNDAY

New Member Sundays will now take place on the 2nd Sunday of the month. We will be welcoming new members on Sunday, April 10th. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Rev. Reichert.

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle will gather on Wednesday, April 6th at 5:30 pm as part of "Pack the Place" night at Pizza Hut. No reservation necessary!

MEN'S GROUP

"GET GOD IN THE GAME: A POKER GROUP FOR GUYS!", an adult men's fellowship, meets on the first Wednesday of the month from 7-9 p.m. – that is April 6th! All levels of skill are welcome. For more information and this month's location, please call Terry Williams at 872-5308.

CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:

Marcie Jagers, Secretary

22937 1140 N Ave

Princeton IL 61356

(815) 659-3432

mail@openprairie.org

Rev. Curran Reichert

308 Park Ave W

Princeton, IL 61356

(815) 872-1661 church phone

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Church Web Site:

www.openprairie.org

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – April 2005 News

Dear Pastor,
Gracia, paz y amore en el nombre de Jesucristo nuestro Salvador y Maestro.

I am writing to thank you for the leadership you have provided in support of Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and to ask that you convey our deep felt appreciation to your congregation for their support and faithful witness to Christ and the Church. I want to say more and share the good news about OCWM. Current figures show that our congregations gave a total of \$2,087,452 in OCWM contributions for 2004. This total income figure puts us \$21,221 above our budgeted goal figure! Our Mission Friends Appeal, which provides each of us as individuals an opportunity to give in support of the whole mission of our Conference, had total receipts of \$16,697 well above our 2003-income figure of \$7,958.

Having met our conference OCWM budget goal for 2004 is a sign of our church family's covenantal and faithful witness to God's mission in the world. A healthy church is a church engaged in mission in and beyond its local community. Our Illinois Conference and United Church of Christ is a mission church with a strong tradition of caring and doing for others, witnessing to the transforming and healing power of Christ and the Gospel.

Our God is a generous and loving God who has provided for our needs and much more to minister and witness in God's name. As God's children we have been provided with what we have needed and the means to do ministry and witness to the deeds and wonders of God in the world. While much more is yet required of us to realize God's ongoing ministry, liberating and empowering wonders, we move ahead in

faith and in the trust of the Christ who sustains us.

Thanks be to God and to all our faithful sisters and brothers in our congregations, across our Illinois Conference and United Church of Christ family for their love and generosity. God's grace, peace, and continuous blessing to you and all the faithful in your congregations as you carry out your ministry and witness in your community and beyond to the saving power and glory of Christ.

Fraternalmente, Rev. Jorge Morales,
Association Conference Minister

Illinois Conference UCC

What does our church's wider mission money do?

Let's follow the dollar!

For every \$100 our church gives to OCWM:

\$71.40 stays right here in the Illinois Conference and its Associations

\$28.60 goes to the national settings of the UCC

OPEN PRAIRIE SHOWS THANKS!

Rev. Jorge Morales will be preaching for us next Sunday! Jorge has played an integral role in our receipt of the Illinois Conference Church Extension & Renewal Grant - \$12,500 last year and \$20,000 this year! A luncheon will be served following worship in his honor. A free-will donation will be taken to benefit the Mission Team. Please plan to attend next Sunday and show Jorge how much Open Prairie appreciates his support!

FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

The second annual Open Prairie Festival of the Arts will be held at the Bureau County Metro Center on Sunday, April 24th from 4-7 p.m.

A silent auction will be held with church members offering unique and priceless items for sale. A **LIVE** auction will also take place during the evening. If you have an item, large or small, for either the silent or live auction, please contact Terri Zearing at 879-8671 or e-mail mail@openprairie.org.

Church members and friends will provide musical entertainment throughout the Festival. A list of the performers will be released in the near future.

A delicious baked potato bar will be available with numerous toppings, served and provided by the Sr. High Youth Group. A variety of desserts will also be served.



All donations will go to the Sr. High Youth Group's 2005 summer mission trip to the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation in Cherry Creek, South Dakota.