

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – April 2006 News

CORRESPONDENCE FROM FRIENDS OF OPUCC

Dear friends,

I appreciate the bulletins and other items that you have been sending to me! I wish it would be possible to come to church activities with you, however 200 miles does create an obstacle. Hopefully, I'll be with you again in June (if my cousin Donna still has the latchstring out for me!!) You all made me feel so welcome and I greatly enjoy keeping up with your activities.

Loves and Hugs,
Doris C. (Chalin) Ninman

P.S. - (a little quote) "We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth!" by Virginia Satir

#2 P.S. – "While a blessing of kindness ripples outward to others, it boomerangs right back to the one who threw the pebble!" Anonymous

Last P.S.! – "An angel is someone who brings out the angel in you"
By Barbara Johnson

Freedom House gratefully acknowledges your generous contribution on behalf of the victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Thanks so very much for all the "comfort bags" for clients! It was so very thoughtful of you!

Take care and God bless,
Stephanie Cartwright

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The first "Open Prairie Spirit Awards" went to Roger Perkins and Paul Ernst for their outstanding contributions to Open Prairie UCC. A big thank you to both of them.

Worship Team

For Maundy Thursday, we will be sharing a joint service with our friends from 1st UCC in Sheffield on April 13th. Open Prairie will be hosting a Seder supper before the Maundy Thursday service.

Be sure to sign up in the church office to reserve a place for dinner.

Easter Sunday please join us for the sunrise service at 7:30 at Pilgrim Park. We will gather at the Pilgrim Park Chapel. If the weather cooperates we'll head up to the Cross. Transportation will be provided up the hill for those in need. Then at 9:00 we will have a "hearty" coffee and fellowship at Open Prairie followed by Easter Services at 10:30.

FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS & POTATO BAR

The third annual Open Prairie Festival of the Arts will be held here at the church on Sunday, April 23rd 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 Kathy Hornbaker at 659-3432 or e-mail kathy@hornbakergardens.com.

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 2006 summer mission trip to the Appalachian South Folklife Center in Pipestem, West Virginia.

LIVING THE QUESTIONS

The Living the Questions series is coming to an end. For more info on this series, please visit the website at www.livingthequestions.com. We have two more classes:

Out into the World: Challenges Facing Progressive Christianity

Sunday, April 2nd, 5:30 – 7:00p.m.
following Dinner and Worship.
Wednesday, April 5th, 7-9 p.m.

YOGA CLASS

Yoga classes continue to be practiced at OPUCC on Wednesday evenings at 6 pm. This is a relaxing, modified Ashtanga class led by Karyn Vaughn. The class focuses on breathing techniques and gentle stretches which relieve stress and help to gain flexibility. Cost is \$20/month with all proceeds going to OPUCC. If interested, call Karyn at (815) 866-4787 or (815) 646-4511. We will have a mat for you to use!

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The closet in the church office reception area has mailboxes for each team, the pastor, the treasurer, the moderator and the choir. If you need to communicate anything with these folks, feel free to drop off your information in their mailbox. Those folks who represent teams are asked to remember to check your mailbox frequently!

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Dear OPUCC Community, it is rare that an article rolls across my computer that catches my attention in such a way that I feel compelled to share it with you in its entirety. Below you will find such an article. Because of its length my regular column will return next month. I wish you the continued blessings of this Lenten season, Rev. Curran Reichert

Gethsemane

It begins each year at this time. At first, there is a trigger---a catalyst---that nudges me inward. Something happens, something minor or major, to turn me toward self-reflection. Once that doorway is opened and I have gone inside, the floodgates open. I'm awash in grief over the seeming cruelties of life. Most of the time, I delude myself into believing this is a personal process, and that the grief and the cruelty is connected only to my life. At some point of fate, I glance at the calendar and am struck with the "ahah!" that this is the season to make the pilgrimage to Gethsemane. The story of Jesus' last heart-breaking journey vibrates deep in my Christian bones, buried like treasure in my unconscious. Even as I actively choose worship in solitude over worship in church, where I am weary and wary of those who cling to dogma as if it is truth rather than risk being open to the organic story emerging even now in our midst, this one story returns to me every year, as Paula D'Arcy is quoted as saying, "disguised as my life."

The particulars are unimportant except to say that I am walking consciously through a loss I never imagined, and would not have chosen. It was given to me to bear, and I do not want it. But, as if to emphasize the point, it comes to me in other ways. Several of my clients walk this same path at the same time, sometimes to the day that events broke open for me. There is no escape from the story they ask me to witness for them, even as I must pass through it myself. I was managing the complexity of this convergence of my story and theirs, my feelings and theirs, *well enough*...until another client, this one unexpected, came through my door sobbing uncontrollably about a love she recently and joyfully found that was now under siege from forces she could not change. I knew then that the hand at my back would not allow me to slip quietly or easily through this one. This was going to be a long, deep dive into the waters of Spirit.

And so it is. I have been seized by grief, taken in and tossed about by suffering so penetrating it seemed a stake pierced my heart. I couldn't breathe for the pain that washed relentlessly through me as the stories, mine and others', kept coming to me as paradoxical gifts. Whenever I was alone, I would weep universal tears for us all.

I have been on this walk many times and know how to give myself to grief. I know that the collective wound is often healed through those of us who are willing to heal the portion of it that

comes as our personal story. I have chosen many times to be used in this process of healing a wound that is both ancient and new: the tearing of love from our hearts by everyday acts of unconsciousness. In the midst of the journey I have made many times, I revisit the question that haunts me: *Is there, somewhere in the heart of God, a hidden cruelty that forces onto people of good hearts unimaginable pain?*

In holy conversation with a friend who called to bear witness with me, I risked asking this question. "Think of Jesus," she said quietly, "and how he walked into Jerusalem knowing of the cruelty that waited for him. Think of him looking from one side of the crowd to the other, the people waving and cheering, wondering who would turn on him and jeer as he struggled to bear the cross. There is cruelty in the world, and we must all bear a portion of it in one way, or another. I don't know where it comes from, or why it's here to be borne. I only know we must bear our share with as much courage and grace as Jesus did."

Her voice gentled as she thought of me carrying not only my personal penetrating sorrow, but that of others as well. "You want this cup to be taken from you," she said, "and if it could be, it would. But that's not the way the story unfolds. In the story, we sometimes feel forsaken. We are sometimes prostrate before the Mystery, pleading---if not to be relieved---at least to be *accompanied* on this terrible journey. It's unknown

where we will end up. But what the Christian story tells us is that, even as a part of us dies, feeling forsaken, another part of us is coming alive in a new, strengthened form. Have courage, my friend. You are not alone. All over this world, at this very minute, people are suffering what you call 'unimaginable pain.' You walk shoulder-to-shoulder with them, each of you bearing just one piece of a suffering that begs to be healed. Heal what you can; trust others will do the same. And when you are complete---when you can finally sigh and say, 'It is finished'---come back to be with those of us who love you."

Placing my personal story into the container of a universal story, even an archetypal story, allows me to put one foot in front of the other to move forward. What waits? We already know it's a crucifixion of some kind. Something in the psyche must die so that something else might come alive. These are the rigorous gifts of the Spirit, the living Mystery, and so long as we set foot to the spiritual path, we are its reluctant recipients.

I don't know where, or even if, this story will touch your story. I only know it's a story that follows me through the years of my life and lives anew each year; whether I want it to or not, it comes to me "disguised as my life." If it has come to you in a similar way, may this ease your suffering as it helps to ease mine. If it doesn't touch you this year, remember it for a time when it does. It's not a universal story because it's the Christian

story of Jesus in his last days. It's the universal story because each of us must one day begin the walk to Gethsemane, and this story tells us how to carry ourselves and bear the pain for all who suffer. Perhaps, in a distant time I can't yet picture, there will be no need for suffering...but we aren't there yet.

Suffering is rampant among the creatures of the earth. This liturgical season is one way we bow in an acknowledgment of that truth, and help to propel it forward toward that distant future, one person and one grief at a time.

Written by: Meredith Jordan, RN, MA, is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor in private practice on the coasts of Maine and Florida. She is the author of *Embracing the Mystery: the Sacred Unfolding in Ordinary People and Everyday Lives*, available through www.amazon.com, New Leaf Distributors, Baker & Taylor Distributing, and through her website at www.sacredportals.org. Her second book, *Standing Still: Hearing the Call to a Spirit-Centered Life*, will be released in September, 2006. She is the co-founder of *Rogers McKay*, a not-for-profit, interfaith spiritual-educational organization, an interfaith spiritual director, and a member of Spiritual Directors International. Jordan can be reached at *Rogers McKay*, P.O. Box 46, Biddeford, Maine, 04005, or 207-283-0752.

ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

The 14th Annual Meeting of the Prairie Association of the Illinois Conference will be held Saturday, April 29, 2006. It will be hosted by First Congregational UCC of Rockton and its pastor, Dan Herman.

The speakers at this meeting will be Michael Bausch and Teri Dary, speaking on "Using Multimedia in Worship."

Michael Bausch is pastor of the Union-Congregational Church UCC of Waupun, Wisconsin, where he and a worship team have seven years experience offering a multimedia worship service as part of their Sunday morning schedule. He is the author of *Silver Screen, Sacred Story: Using Multimedia in Worship* published by The Alban Institute. Teri Dary serves as media arts coordinator at the church. A liturgical media artist, she produces the worship presentations each week. Dary and Bausch have been feature presenters at numerous conferences and seminars.

THE DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS IS APRIL 21. Please speak to Rev. Reichert for more information.

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

Coffee Hour

The Fellowship Team is delighted to sponsor the Coffee Hour after church each week but we are in need of volunteers. You may help in the following ways: 1) Sign up to "do" the coffee hour one Sunday. This involves providing treats, making coffee and lemonade, set up and clean up. There is a sign up sheet at the back of the church. Please take the opportunity to be part this mission if you are able. 2) Provide treats (they need not be homemade!) which can be put in the freezer and used as necessary. Please contact Becky Perkins for more information.

Calling and Caring

The Fellowship Team is looking for folks who are willing to visit members of our church family who are in need of a visit. We are also in need of people who will provide a meal (you need not be a cook...carry out will work in many cases!) for families or individuals as needed. Please prayerfully consider this outreach opportunity. There is a sign up sheet at the back of the church. Please contact Becky Perkins for more information.

Mission Team

Greetings from the Mission Team, We will be providing the meal for the 4 o' clock service on April 2nd. Lori Pettee, the only Mission Team member who really likes to cook, has graciously offered to plan the meal while the rest of us will chop and stir, toting barges and lifting bales at her command. Please come and join us. Lori's a great cook.

If you are interested in having an Open Prairie sweatshirt or t-shirt please let me know. There are a few in the foyer but if your size is not there please sign the sheet

expressing interest and the size you would like and we'll go from there.

The Mission Team has recently created the "Good Neighbor Fund" to help provide food, gas, or lodging coupons for transient folk who come to us for help. If you would like to contribute to this fund please talk to Paul Ernst, Open Prairie's wizard of finance.

Our next Jubilee Sunday will be the last Sunday in April. We hope to be making May baskets for those who are ill or who find it difficult to get to church. The Hornbaker's Aunt Mary, our resident expert, will be leading us through the process. It should be a lot of fun and a chance for us to gather together to make someone else happy. It's what we do best at Open Prairie.

Soon we hope to offer visitors to Open Prairie a gift: a honey bear with our Open Prairie logo and a bit of pithy but inspirational scripture attached. When you see the Kuhnerts please thank them for this service they have graciously offered to provide.

Everybody has been great about contributing food to our basket in the foyer for the food pantry. Keep 'em coming. This month the food pantry has requested pancake mix and syrup. Thanks everybody.

Curran and I had the pleasure of attending Gateway's award ceremony and receiving an award on behalf of everyone at Open Prairie. It was great to have the work we've done this past year acknowledged publicly, and we sure look forward to many years of service and fellowship with everybody at Gateway.

Peace, Kelly

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 4/01 8:00 am Rummage Sale
4/02 4:00 pm Dinner/Worship
“Living the Questions”
4/05 8:00 am Prayer Group at Autry’s
7:00 pm “Living the Questions”
4/06 6:30 pm Choir at Autry-Webbers
4/09 10:30 am Palm Sunday Service
4/11 7:00 pm Team Meeting
4/12 8:00 am Prayer Group at Autry’s
6:30 pm Choir at Autry-Webbers
4/13 6:00 pm Seder Supper/ Service
4/16 7:30 am Sunrise Srv./ Pilgrim Pk.
9:00 am “Hearty Coffee” at OP
10:30 am Easter Sunday Worship
4/19 8:00 am Prayer Group at Autry’s
4/20 6:30 pm Choir at Autry-Webbers
4/23 10:30 am Worship
4/25 7:00 pm Church Council Meeting
4/26 8:00 am Prayer Group at Autry’s
4/27 6:30 pm Choir at Autry-Webbers
4/30 10:30 am Jubilee Sunday

GREETER SCHEDULE

- April 2 Jim Sears and Gene Humke
April 9 Ray & Carol Kuhnert
April 16 Suzie Stalter and Janis Lund
April 23 Lori Pettee & Trishia Jones

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle meets the first Wednesday night of every month to share a meal. This is open to all the women of Open Prairie and their pals. For more information call Donna Chelin at 875-2060.

PIZZA! PIZZA!

Pizza Hut day for Open Prairie is the first Wednesday on the month. Be sure to pick up a form at church to take with you! This is an easy way to earn some cash for the church!

OH NUTS!

One pound bags of tasty pecan halves are available for sale! You can pick up a bag or two anytime at the church office or Sunday mornings. Cost \$8.00.

A NOTE FROM PEGGY

I want to thank all of you for your warm welcome, patience, and willingness to help.

I have enjoyed meeting many of you and look forward to the opportunity to work with you.

PRAYER GROUP

A contemplative prayer group gathers every Wednesday morning at the home of Hal & Margaret Autrey from 8:00-8:45 a.m. We open our prayer time with the reading of a prayer, poem or Scripture. We then begin 25 minutes of contemplative prayer & meditation with the sound of a singing bowl. We conclude with a time for joys and concerns. We extend an invitation to anyone interested to talk to Margaret Autrey or Kathy Hornbaker, or stop by on a Wednesday morning to join us!



Open Prairie UCC
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CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:
25 E. Marion Street
Princeton, IL 61356
(815)872- 5150
mail@openprairie.org

Rev. Curran Reichert
308 Park Ave W
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 872-1661 home office
(815) 872-1515 home phone
revreichert@openprairie.org

Administrative Assistant: Peggy Walley

Church Web Site:
www.openprairie.org

RUMMAGE SALE

Support The Rummage Sale!

Friday March 31 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
Saturday April 1 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Now that our closets are clean – we all
need more stuff!

Remember the saying goes:
“One person’s trash is another person’s
treasure!”