

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – August 2004 News

WORSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Worship on Sunday, August 8th will be a combined service with our friends from the Sheffield UCC at Pilgrim Park. Worship will be lead by Lu Ann Ferron and Rev. Doug Zimmerman. Worship time is 10:30 am at the pavilion near the parking lot.

Worship will be followed by a potluck luncheon. Please bring a dish to pass, drinks, and your own table service. A grill will be provided for those who want to bring meat to grill.

Following the luncheon, the pool will be open from noon - 2:00 pm. Cost is \$1.00 per person.

CORRESPONDENCE

The beautiful bouquet in May from my church family was indeed a joy. Thank you and the two lovely messengers who delivered them. - Stella Earnest

We are sending this memorial gift for Alice Bryant who was a faithful and most reliable member of the Women in Mission Committee of the Association for many years. She is remembered with much affection and we are sorry for the loss of such a special person. She was so knowledgeable about the UCC and so devoted to its work. Please us this small contribution appropriately. We are the members remaining from Alice's time on the committee. Blessing in Christian love, Ruth Gerlich, Lu Ladenburger, Barbara Skelley

*Dear Curran and Open Prairie,
Thank you for the pure pleasure of sharing worship with you today. What a Joy to see, hear and Feel the Spirit of God in this Flock of Believers! I look forward to our time together on August 8th. Blessings to each of you.
-Lu Ferron*

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle meets on the first Wednesday of each month for supper at 6:00 p.m. Our next meeting will be August 4th at 6:00 p.m. at the Garden Room Grille. Please call Freida Anderson to make a reservation.

BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

8/01 Barb Schiff
8/03 Linda Ernst
8/04 Mary Davidson
8/12 Alice Beneke
8/14 Stephanie Hale
8/16 Terry Williams
8/19 Becky Perkins
8/20 Sue Stumpf
8/24 Suzie Stalter
8/28 Steve Matthews
8/29 Lou Zearing

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Open Prairie received a check for \$107 from our "Monical's night" in April and \$70 from our night in June. This money was given to the youth group. Our next Monical's night will be coming up in September.
- Open Prairie will provide Lunch in the Park and a bake sale at Soldiers & Sailors Park on Friday, August 27th. Mark your calendars now and watch for details to come!

MISSION TEAM

Our Mission Team invites your support of our local Food Pantry. For the month of August we will collect shampoo, bath soap, toothpaste, and toothbrushes. Please bring your donations to worship on Sunday mornings. Thanks for your support!

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FELLOWSHIP TEAM

✂The after church Coffee Hour is a great place to become acquainted with the OPUCC family. We are in need of volunteers to help the Fellowship Team provide this service each week. If you have not had a chance to serve as coffee hour host you may do so by signing up after church next Sunday. If you are hesitant to take on this task please consider inviting a friend or member of the Fellowship Team to act as co-host. It's easy, it's fun, and can be done without baking a thing!

✂Margaret Autrey has agreed to serve as our first church "cheer" lady and will send get well and thinking of you notes as requested. Please contact Margaret with the names and addresses of OPUCC family and friends who would enjoy hearing from us.

PRAIRIE VIEW PARTY

As part of our participation with Church Women United, we provided the June birthday party for residents of Prairie View Nursing Home. Those attending the party included June Harmon, Lynette Ivey, Steve Taylor, Curran Reichert, Katie Morrison, Michael Zearing, Sallee Zearing, and Tara Bonucci. We served angel food cake with strawberries. The Fellowship Team provided gifts for the nine residents celebrating June birthdays. Janis Land did an excellent job choosing the perfect gifts! Curran provided the musical entertainment. This was a wonderful opportunity for local mission outreach.

STAR CHART

Please note that Victor Borst is still preparing a start chart each month. Copies are available on Sunday mornings at worship.

BOOK GROUP TO MEET

The Open Prairie Book Group will gather on Sunday, August 15th at 7:00 PM. Meeting location to be announced! We will be discussing YEAR OF WONDERS by Geraldine Brooks. All are welcome to attend. For more information please contact Becky Perkins or Ron McCutchan. Join us if you can!

CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:
22937 1140 N Ave
Princeton IL 61356
(815) 659-3432
mail@openprairie.org

Marcie Jagers, Secretary

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

Church Web Site:
www.openprairie.org

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WORSHIP TEAM

USHERS & GREETERS

From the Constitution of Open Prairie (Article II: Purpose), we find these words regarding welcoming: *“Open Prairie not only proclaims but deliberately practices an extravagant hospitality that invites and welcomes persons of every gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, economic status and ability. This hospitality extends to full participation in the life and ministry of the church”*

We believe greeting people to be a vital part of our worship service. Our greeters/ushers make the first impression and we have complete faith in you! So, again, thank you, for your part in our worship service.

Here are the duties, for those of you who have signed up to be greeters, and for those who might volunteer if you knew more about the responsibilities of ushers. If you have any questions, please ask any of the members of the worship team for assistance!

- Plan to arrive at least 20 minutes early. (10:10 am for regular service)
- Locate the bulletins, offering baskets, worship count sheet, guest book and extra offering envelopes. Place the guest book on the front of the desk at the parking lot entrance. Extra offering envelopes should be available at both entrances.
- Put the offering baskets and count sheet wherever you can get to them during the service.
- Ok, now you're ready to go! Greet people and offer bulletins at each entrance. If you see a new person, please extend our extravagant hospitality by introducing them to someone else.
- Once you're seated for the service, fill in the count sheet and check for the offering in the bulletin. Usually there is music playing during the collection. Place the collection baskets on the altar and sit back down.
- After church, count the offering. Get the receipt book and the bank zippered bag

from the “office box” on the fellowship table.

Write OPUCC and the date at the top. You and your partner should count the number of envelopes, the number of checks and the amount of cash. Double check each count and write it on the slip. We need two signatures on the slip. Tear off the top slip and put with the offering in the bag. The bag needs to be given to Becky Sapp. If she is not at church, please take it to her, or ask someone to drop it off.

- The count sheet goes back in the office box, not with money.

WORSHIP TEAM AUGUST NOTES:

Thank you to everyone who has read or acted out our Scripture readings and thank you to Linda Ernst for coordinating this team of folks who add so much to our worship.

Thank you also to Jan Milles and Steve Taylor who agreed to coordinate Greeters/Ushers (Jan) and set up/take down (Steve).

We appreciate all the work that goes into getting a service off the ground every week. If you would like to help out, please call:

Linda Ernst - Reading Scripture
Jan Milles - Usher/Greeter
Steve Taylor - Set Up

We have re-instituted using name tags each Sunday because it helps with all the visitors and new members. We have visitors every week and have new members join every month. Please look for and use name tags!

Since attendance at the Taize services was low, we decided to cancel the July and August services. We will plan a bible study to start up in the fall.

Next meeting: August 17 at Rev. Curran's home at 7:00 pm.

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FROM THE MODERATOR

Church Council continues to meet monthly to exchange information and plans. Many thanks to all the members for their contributions of time and effort in the work of the Church. Please know that any and all members of the church are welcome to attend the Church Council meetings to provide input and exchange ideas. Our next meeting is Tuesday, July 27 at 7:00 p.m. at 1115 Prairie Lane, Princeton.

Last month we were updated by the Building Committee on their work and discussed a variety of possible options. While we want to share as much information with everyone as quickly as it becomes available, I'm sure you appreciate that negotiations need to be tied up before news can be available. Rest assured that final decisions will be brought to the congregation for ratification before the Church is fully committed.

I would like to thank Don Schiff for his efforts as our first treasurer in getting our finances organized and systems in place. Thanks also to Rich Hornbaker for his software consulting in that process. While we're sorry to see Don step back from that post, we are excited to have Paul Ernst step forward with enthusiasm! Our church finances are certainly not the foremost aspect of the church, but they are highly important in allowing us to accomplish greater goals. Looking forward, we encourage folks to be thinking about budgeting for the respective areas and to pledging for 2005.

Much is happening in our Church during what we traditionally have referred to as a "slower" time of year. For our newest members, please speak up and get involved in the life of the Church community. As Pastor Curran says, Open Prairie is a safe place for all. It is also a place that welcomes new and different ideas for worship, for service, for recreation, and for renewal.

-Al Forristall, Moderator

CHRISTIAN ED

Sr. High Mission Trip 2004

Eleven youth, 3 college support youth and 5 adults left Zearing Park on July 1 and headed for Cherry Creek, South Dakota. Two 15 passenger vans and one minivan were packed solid. We stayed the first night at Crestwood UCC in Sioux Falls, SD.

We were up early on Friday and off on our way to Custer State Park. We stopped in the badlands and did some hiking up and sliding down as the case may be.

Our next stop was just outside Wall Drug. The rental van chugged to a stop. We let it rest a bit, then it started again and we rolled into Wall Drug about 2:30 p.m. The van completely died in a parking lot. Rich was on the phone with Enterprise for about 3 hours. The kids were having a great time shopping and eating. Enterprise could not get us a vehicle that evening. We piled all of our "stuff" and bodies into our remaining 2 vans and drove to Custer State Park. Dan Kuhnert joined us after being on a 5-week trip to Alaska with his parents.

The next morning, July 3, a mini van arrived and we were a little less cramped. We drove to Sylvan Lake and swam while some climbed Harney Peak, the highest point east of the Rocky Mountains. We camped at Shady Rest, a remote area with no running water. The campers were not thrilled about this until Kathy found them some very nice showers 2 miles down the road.

July 4 we headed for Cherry Creek. The landscape was beautiful to watch as we traveled. Several pit stops later we arrived at Cherry Creek. A Pow Wow was still going strong at the Community Center (inside because of the rain). As we were locked out of our church, we decided to join the Pow Wow. Several more dance competitions were held and we watched and joined some of them.

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We then found our “key” connection and began unloading our vans about 2 a.m.

The next 4 days we did work projects in the mornings and Vacation Bible School in the afternoon. Work projects were: serve food at the youth center, mow lawns, pull weeds, paint Waloke’s trailer blue, fill dumpster with junk, paint the community Pow Wow Circle including bleachers in a large circle, scour and mop the community center floors.

Vacation Bible School

- about 50 kids showed up
- tie dye t-shirts were given away
- finger painted
- acted out Scripture
- played kick ball
- painted crosses and made necklaces
- played parachute games
- and much more
- offered drinks and treats every day
- went home every afternoon exhausted

We offered a community feed one evening and served spaghetti, french bread, beans, and brownies to about 75 people. Louise Widow, one of the elders, was able to be with us. We were privileged once again to be able to enter a sweat with the Native Americans. The rocks were hot and the praying was intense.

The repaired 15-passenger van was returned on Wednesday the 7th.

We packed up Thursday night and left Friday for home. We stayed again at Crestwood UCC and enjoyed a trip downtown to see the Falls. Many of our youth got a little bit wet. We closed Friday night with a very moving and emotional foot washing. We rolled into Princeton around 10 p.m. on Saturday night. A great trip with a great group of people!

Youth: Jared Bartman, Tom Beneke, Carl Carman, Ben Flanders, Nick Forristall, Stephanie Hale, Trishia Jones, Tony

McCombs, Scott Roberts, Creal Zearing, Joe Zearing

College support: Molly Hornbaker, Brian Taylor, Dan Kuhnert

Adults: Curran Reichert, Katie Morrison, Kathy Hornbaker, Bill Beneke, Rich Hornbaker

PASTOR’S MESSAGE

Here’s the news hot off the press...OPUCC’s story is to be included in the new edition of the ONA Idea Book for the UCC. Most entries are one paragraph...they are examples of how ONA churches, campus ministries, seminaries, etc. are living out their ONA commitment - letting their light shine. Open Prairie has been embraced by Ann B. Day the ONA National Coordinator as an example of living out an ONA commitment under challenging circumstances. So, she invited me to write a page about us, our story and our ministry in Princeton Illinois.

With the help of Kelly Autrey-Webber’s script from our Pentecost Celebration here is the page that was submitted for the book.

May God bless your summer days.

In Christ,
Curran

Pentecost 2004-A new Church is Born

Today is our day! As a community we honor our past today by telling our story. By sharing these memories, we celebrate our present and our hopes for the future. There is not one Open Prairie story; there are many. Every one of us has something to share. Today we will weave some of our diverse stories together into one. Where does the Open Prairie story start?

We could start with Jesus, and his radical message of justice and inclusive love. Or we could start with our progressive denomination, the UCC, and its long list of famous firsts: the first African American ordained by a Protestant denomination, in

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1785; the first woman ordained since New Testament times, in 1853; the first openly gay person ordained, in 1972. But perhaps it would be best to start a little closer to home.

The Open Prairie story starts in 1838, with a minister from Princeton named Owen Lovejoy. Lovejoy was the pastor of the Hampshire Colony Congregational church, which was known to some as the "nigger church" because of Lovejoy's anti-slavery preaching. He was a radical outcast until the public caught up with his message; then he went to Washington and, as a member of Congress, was one of the principal architects of the Emancipation Proclamation.

But not every minister is an Owen Lovejoy, and over time Hampshire Colony lost his unique spirit. It's a common story among mainstream Protestant churches: the fires that once burned hot, cooled down. In 1992, Hampshire Colony called Pastor Gordon Grant who was to some considered a maverick in his own right. He was a progressive Christian and his desire to create a church where all would be welcome was met with considerable conflict. Gordie helped start in Princeton a Gay/Lesbian support group and sought to lead Hampshire Colony through the ONA Process.

In 1985 the General Synod of the UCC adopted the Open and Affirming resolution. Open and Affirming is the designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the church which make public statements of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The General Synod's 1985 resolution encouraged individual churches to become Open and Affirming, and the individual churches were supposed to take it from there. In 1999, Hampshire Colony voted on whether to become Open and Affirming. The vote was defeated. In September of 2002, Gordie left Hampshire Colony, and a search committee for a new permanent pastor was formed.

I, Kelly Autrey Webber, served as the search committee chair. We developed a

profile of Hampshire Colony and sent it out. Forty applicant profiles came back for us to evaluate. I remember very clearly reading Curran Reichert's profile for the first time. Some of the other profiles were very good, but Curran's was like a breath of fresh air in a stuffy room. At the same time, I think we were all concerned when we read about her partner, Reverend Katie Morrison a minister in good standing with the PC/USA; even the most Open and Affirming of us were afraid that such a controversial call might split the church.

Yet, in good conscience we could not turn our backs on someone who was clearly the best candidate. With every conversation we had with Curran, a vision grew: a vision of all that a church could be and so often isn't. A vision of connectedness, compassion, vibrancy, energy, and inclusivity. She was subsequently voted down twice to be called as pastor to Hampshire Colony, UCC.

After the second vote was lost, everyone went to mourn in their own way. I went out to the cemetery to talk things over with Owen Lovejoy. Then I went to the Hornbakers, and we sat for a while without saying much. I said, "Well, that's it for me. What do you think about starting a new church?" And Rich and Kathy said, "Sounds good. Let's do it." The amazing thing is that other people have told me similar stories about how they had the idea. It just seemed to spring up all over within our little community. One of the first church teams to take form was the worship team. They got going and organized a service out at the Hornbakers for the following Sunday. We weren't sure how many people would show up. 70 people came to worship that day. We had no pastor, no by-laws, no building - but we were a church, in every important sense of the word. By the next Sunday, we had an official place to meet at Pilgrim Park and Rev. Prudence Yagmin came out of retirement to serve as temporary pastor, followed by a very positive three-month interim stint by Rev. Gene Kraus from November 2003 through January 2004.

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The search committee continued to meet. We all had felt so strongly that Curran was called to us. We all had witnessed so many unlikely chances, and experienced so many moments of power. There's just no other way to say it: we all felt that God had called Curran to us. The search committee voted to recommend that the new congregation call Curran. The congregation voted-and we weren't worried about the count this time! We called Curran and Katie on a cell phone from Pilgrim Park to tell them the news.

In February 2004 Curran and Katie came and began the current chapter of the Open Prairie story. We wanted to be an integral part of the community, so we began to meet at the Prouty Building, a community center located in the heart of Princeton. We've faced some hard times together as a family. It's a family that has been growing steadily ever since. We are an Open and Affirming, Just Peace and racially inclusive congregation that is at present approximately 90 members strong.

Thanks to generous contributions from individuals and churches throughout the United Church of Christ, folks from the Presbyterian denomination and the Disciples of Christ, we are inches away from securing a new worship space of our own. Thanks also to additional fundraising appeals on our behalf, each week Open Prairie receives countless letters of support from other Open and Affirming congregations and supportive colleagues. The response has been inspiring and has helped OPUCC to feel deeply connected to our brothers and sisters in the church at large. It is one thing to know that we are all hypothetically one in Christ, it is another thing to be able to stand before the congregation and read letters of love, support and prayers that are being extended in our direction.

In addition to outside support we have had some generous donations from within the congregation, the Prairie Association and the Illinois Conference Church Extension Program as well, those gifts have put us in a healthy position to begin conversations about

purchasing a space. We are optimistic about the future of this little church that could...that could live into God's radical vision of inclusivity and hospitality for all people.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday Mornings (except 8/8)

10:30 am Worship at Prouty Building

- | | | |
|------|----------|------------------------------|
| 8/01 | 10:30 am | New Member Sunday |
| 8/03 | 5:00 pm | Produce box pick-up |
| 8/04 | 8:15 am | Prayer Group |
| | 6:00 pm | Prairie Circle @ Garden Room |
| 8/05 | 6:30 pm | Choir Practice |
| 8/08 | 10:30 am | Worship at Pilgrim Park |
| 8/10 | 5:00 pm | Produce box pick-up |
| 8/11 | 8:15 am | Prayer Group |
| 8/12 | 6:30 pm | Choir Practice |
| 8/15 | 7:00 pm | Book Club |
| 8/17 | 5:00 pm | Produce box pick-up |
| | 7:00 pm | Worship Team |
| 8/18 | 8:15 am | Prayer Group |
| 8/19 | 6:30 pm | Choir Practice |
| 8/24 | 5:00 pm | Produce box pick-up |
| | 7:00 pm | Church Council Meeting |
| 8/25 | 8:15 am | Prayer Group |
| 8/26 | 6:30 pm | Choir Practice |
| 8/27 | | Lunch in the Park |
| 8/31 | 5:00 pm | Produce box pick-up |