

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – August 2005 News

### MISSION TEAM

Greetings from the Mission Team,

What a month it's been! The Harry Potter event (in which Open Prairie took on the role of Honeydukes Sweet Shop, the wizarding candy shop from the J.K. Rowling novels) was a resounding success. What fun it all was! The Webber garage turned into a scene painting shop, and many nights were spent with Ron, Roger, Linda, Paul, and Nikki painting backdrops for our stage setting. One of my favorite memories is of Paul creating the truly creepy Dementors. Adam spent weeks pouring chocolate into molds to make hundreds of chocolate frogs, rats, Grimms, and lightning bolts. Janice and Suzie spent the days leading up to their vacation making hard candy bats and skulls. Terri, Lynette, and Becky baked an assortment of Dementor Delights, pumpkin pasties, and Cauldron cakes. And Margaret and Hal, my wonderful mom and dad, sweltered for days tying hundreds of wizard cards to each chocolate frog. But all the hard work really paid off. No sooner had we raised Mom's marvelous Honeydukes sign than we had people lining up for Harry Potter treats. From 6:30 to 11 that night we were slammed with gleeful folks who were having a ball. I can't thank Lori, Barb, Joe, Pat, Hal and Margaret, Matt, Paul the iceman, and Mimi and Linda, Queens of Dragonsnot and Butterbeer, enough. They were amazing. Though it was HOT and stressful, no one lost their cool or their sense of humor. It was a blast! Thank you all. My final heartfelt thanks go to the heroines of the Harry Potter movie where Open Prairie was selling popcorn and soda. Plan A had been for me to go and set them up in a leisurely way sometime in the evening. Well, goodbye to Plan A. I

couldn't escape from all the Honeydukes hoopla, but Lark, Susan H., Mimi (she's everywhere), Cherie, Marcie, Angie, and Nikki valiantly held the fort. After expenses, we ended up hauling off to Gringotts about 1,100 Galleons (dollars). Not bad for a glorified bake sale!

The money will be used to keep our joyful Open Prairie message out in the world on NPR and elsewhere.

Our next venture is the Lunch in the Park which will be held Friday, August 26th. If you would like to get involved, we would love to have your help. We need workers and bakers. Contact Kelly at 876-1106 if you would like to dive in. Also, please don't forget the food pantry in these summer months. They would like us to collect shampoo, bath soap, toothpaste, tooth brushes during the month of August.

Thanks again, everyone. I really am most grateful for all your help and support. I love you all. Peace, Kelly

### PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle meets the first Wednesday night of every month and has supper together. On August 3<sup>rd</sup> we will gather at Monical's Pizza at 6:00 p.m. This is open to all the women of Open Prairie and their pals. For more information call June Harmon at 872-4453.

### WORSHIP NOTES

**Worship Time Continues** to be 9:30 a.m. for the month of August. We will return to 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, September 4<sup>th</sup>.

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – August 2005 News

### **THE BIG WEEKEND!**

The big weekend for dedicating our new church home is fast approaching. Hopefully everyone has September 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> highlighted in their calendars! Here are the plans that are in the works!

#### *September 17 Wine Tasting & Cabaret:*

Mark your calendars now for the evening of September 17, when Open Prairie will open its new doors at 25 East Marion to the community for what should be a very fun event! Committees are planning for an hour of hors d'oeuvres and several unique selections of wine, followed by an hour of cabaret music with our best local talent.

This will be a chance to show off the new building while raising some funds for the completion expenses. Stay tuned for information on times, ticket prices, and other details. We'll have lots of openings for participation also. This will be a very fun event!

#### *September 18*

The dedication of the building will take place during our 10:30 a.m. worship service at 25 E. Marion. We are honored to welcome Rev. Nancy Nelson Elsenheimer from the UCC national office and our Association Minister, Rev. Dr. Rich Pleva, as our special guests. This will be Rich's last visit with our church family as he leaves his post and moves on in his ministry.

Later in the day, we will share a potluck meal beginning at 4:00 p.m. At 5:00 p.m. there will be a brief dedication ceremony to welcome area congregations and clergy who might otherwise be occupied in the morning. The evening will conclude with a barn dance following the dedication. Jim Hix from Chillicothe will be our live caller for the dance and we will also have a live string band providing music. A free will offering will be

collected to pay the band and caller. This will be loads of fun for folks of all ages! Don't miss this chance to celebrate our new church home.

### **OPEN TABLE**

Open Table is a small group, sponsored by Open Prairie, specifically designed to support GLBT people within our community. It is open to all regardless of church affiliation. Some dates to reserve:

- GLBT focused adult education series meeting at church at 1:00 p.m.. All are welcome.
  - October 16 Homosexuality and the Bible
  - October 23 Issues facing GLBT community: aging, parenting, and coping
  - October 30 Activism 101.
- October 22. All-inclusive Halloween Party hosted by Suzie Stalter & Janis Land. Costume required.
- October 28 & 29 Coalition gathering at Pilgrim Park. Contact Gene Humke at 309-699-5941
- December 16 Open Table Christmas Party at 25 East Marion

If you have ideas for a gathering space, activities or places, please contact Rev. Curran Reichert and she will pass on information to the group.

### **TEAM MEETING**

Our next Team Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the pastor's place. Instead of having meetings four Tuesday nights of the month, all teams meet together once a month for two hours. I look forward to seeing all the teams represented on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Thanks, Rev. Reichert

### **PASTOR'S MESSAGE**

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Greetings OPUCC Family,

This is an exciting time to be the church locally, regionally and nationally.

I say be the church rather than be in the church, because at this point in history I believe the church of which we are a part is in us, as well as around us. I have never been more proud to be a part of the United Church of Christ.

This past July at Synod in Atlanta, over 3,000 people (six representing OPUCC) gathered to bring to life the hopes and the dreams of churches throughout the US to fruition. These are local churches just like us, who labor throughout the year to give voice to the social justice issues that effect their/our communities and the whole of our world. At Synod their/our voices are heard, discussed and put in the form of resolutions which are voted on by people who represent the diversity that is the UCC. This years decisions, while not binding on the local church, set a precedence for justice issues within the UCC as a whole. This year the national setting affirmed as it has done from its inception, stances on issues of fairness and inclusion that set historical precedence and are important markers for us as people of faith.

A pastor by the name of Donnley Dutcher, from St John UCC in Freeport, artfully summed up other historically ground breaking decisions made throughout the lifetime of our Denomination. He wrote this particular piece in response to the decision of General Synod to endorse same sex marriage. It is important to note that this endorsement was one of many significant decisions made in Atlanta this past July.

To learn more about the other resolutions that were endorsed, please spend a moment or two browsing the UCC website, [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org), and learn more about our Denomination's commitment to peace, justice and equality for all people in the name of Jesus Christ.

### **UCC 'Firsts'** (by Rev. Donnely Dutcher)

"The United Church of Christ and its forebears has a long and storied heritage of being bold in its leadership, frequently taking a stand, starting a ministry, or opening the church and its ministry to those who had previously been closed out from responding to the call and Spirit of God in their lives. Individuals, groups of laity and clergy, congregations, and denominational bodies of the UCC have led the way in instituting new expressions and practices of faith because of the depth of belief in the love, grace, openness and justice of God.

Due to these bold stands the U.C.C. and its forbears has often been subject to accusations of being "beyond the boundaries" of appropriate Christian faith. Leading the way in bold, risk-taking action has brought our forebears, and us in these very days, much "heat" for our vision and action in response to the call of God in our lives.

The story begins with the great risks taken by those Pilgrims and Puritans who wanted to reform and improve the church of England, but eventually braved the hardships of the journey to and life in a new world because of their zeal for religious freedom and freedom of expression. In these days, the United Church of Christ strives to continue to live to the ideals, the passion, the foresight, the risk-taking, and the boldness of faith that remains true to the call and Spirit of God moving in the

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – August 2005 News

hearts and lives of people and congregations of faith. Here are many of the 'firsts' instituted by the United Church of Christ or those who were a part of its predecessor denominations. May you be blessed and proud of the heritage of which you are a part:

- Our forebears were the first church to experiment with democracy, with each congregation being self-governing and able to elect its own ministers.
- Our forebears established the first public schools, 1635.
- They organized:
  - the first college for men in the United States - Harvard, 1636.
  - the first college for Native Americans - Dartmouth College, 1769.
  - the first college for men and women - Oberlin, 1834.
  - the first college for women - Mt. Holyoke, 1837.
- We were the first church to have one of its pastors take a stand against slavery. He was Samuel Sewell in 1700.
- One of our Congregational Churches, Old South Meeting House, was the organizing sight for the first act of civil disobedience in U.S. History - the "Boston Tea Party," 1773.
- We published the first African-American author, Phyllis Wheatley, in 1773.
- We ordained the first African-American pastor, Lemuel Haynes, in 1785.
- We organized the first foreign missionary society in the United States, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, in 1810.
- We were the organizing church for the defense of the Amistad captives in 1839.
- We were the first united church in U. S. history, the Evangelical Synod of North America, in 1840.
- We organized the first anti-slavery society in the United States, the American Missionary Association in 1846.
- We were the first denomination to ordain a woman in the United States, Antoinette Brown, in 1853.
- We were instrumental in establishing the first colleges for African-Americans: Howard University, Berea College, Hampton Institute, Atlanta University, Fisk University, Dillard University, Tougaloo College, Talladega University, LeMoyne College, Huston-Tillotson College, Avery Institute, following the Civil War.
- We established the first residential facility for adults with mental retardation or developmental disabilities, Emmaus Homes, July 4, 1893.
- We were the first merger of two churches with significant different polity, the Congregational Christian and the Evangelical and Reformed, 1957.
- We wrote the first Statement of Faith addressing God in first person, 1959.
- We brought suit against the Federal Communication Commission to allow people of color to have access to and be seen on the televised airwaves, 1959.
- The first African-American to be elected president of the National Council of Churches was from the United Church of Christ, W. Sterling Cary, 1972.
- We ordained the first woman in Puerto Rico, Candita Mattos, 1972.
- We ordained the first openly gay person, William Johnson, in 1972.
- We were the first denomination to have one of its churches call a lesbian to be its pastor, Diane Darling, 1980.

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – August 2005 News

- We were the first Christian denomination to name racism a sin, 1989.
- We were the first mainline denomination to welcome a congregation serving gay, lesbian, transgender and allied people, Spirit of the Lakes, MN, 1992.
- We published the first denomination hymnal with broad inclusive language, 1995.
- We were the first major denomination to make a statement in favor of same-sex marriage, 2005.

We have been enriched by the efforts of those who have been and are willing to step boldly into God's Call for us as a Denomination. Let us continue to keep our eyes, ears and hearts open to the Still Speaking God.

Rev. Curran Reichert

### CHURCH INFORMATION

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Church Office:  
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Church Web Site:  
[www.openprairie.org](http://www.openprairie.org)

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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8/03	6:00	pm	Prairie Circle
8/04	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
8/09	7:00	pm	Monthly Team Meeting
8/11	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
8/18	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
8/23	7:00	pm	Church Council Meeting
8/25	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
8/26			Lunch in the Park
			Worship – 9:30 am at Prouty on Sundays

**OFFICE NOTE:** Marcie will be out of the office August 8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

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#### AUGUST

1	Barb Schiff
3	Linda Ernst
4	Mary Davidson
6	Tom Jones
8	Travis Olson
12	Alice Beneke
14	Stephanie Hale
19	Becky Perkins
	Ben Fisher
	Ashley Kasperski
20	Sue Stumpf
23	Jared Jagers
24	Suzie Stalter
27	Scott Roberts
28	Steve Matthews
29	Lou Zearing

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

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – August 2005 News

### CHRISTIAN ED

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#### Sr. High 2005 Mission Trip

Our group included Jared Bartman, Tom Beneke, Carl Carman, Lauren Flowers, Nick Forristall, Jared Jagers, Tara Jagers, Tony McCombs, Trishia Jones, Tyler Taylor, Creal Zearing, and Joe Zearing. Adults were Kathy Hornbaker as youth leader, Al Forristall and Lou Zearing as cooks, and young adult leaders Brian Taylor, Molly Hornbaker and David Hornbaker.

Two weeks before we were to leave for South Dakota, we discovered there was a misunderstanding with the Cherry Creek UCC Church. There was a group of 45-50 arriving on July 7, which was the same day we were to arrive. We started making phone calls to find a new place to stay. With the help of many, we finally were invited to Punca Creek UCC near Bonesteel, South Dakota. O, Happy Day!!

We left Princeton on July 7 and traveled to Crestwood UCC in Sioux Falls, SD. We stayed overnight and left early Friday for Custer State Park. We stopped off in Rapid City, SD and had great ice cream desserts at the Firehouse. We then drove to Bear Butte to climb the sacred mountain. A storm had just gone through and the beautiful sunset was breathtaking.

We traveled back to Custer State Park and pitched our tents (in the dark) at the Game Lodge Campground Group Facility. Star watching was incredible. Saturday morning we went driving to find the buffalo and find them we did. There was a large herd of mamas and their babies. No one was allowed to get near them. That afternoon we went to Sylvan Lake and swam, hiked,

napped and played. It was very hot and the water was perfect. We went out to eat at Sylvan Lodge and then returned to our campsite. We shared our images of the day at the spires. There was a lot of laughter around the campfire.

Sunday morning we packed up and headed for Punca Creek. We arrived about 7:00 p.m. and Judy and Judith (twins) met us and gave us a key to our new home for the next 4 days. We also found that there was an annual rodeo going on a mile down the road, so we jumped in the vans and enjoyed the show.

Monday morning brought a work project at the new Youth Center at Punca Creek. Our kids helped finish installing siding on the building. We waited for the electrician to come so we could thread the wires, but they didn't show. The kids took turns mowing the lawn. Very thorough and much needed cleaning took place in the kitchen area – including behind and under the refrigerator! We cleared a large area to use for recreation in the afternoons. We also helped Judy take junk to the dump.

Each day the children gathered for Scripture, music, crafts and recreation. The kids decorated a banner with their handprints. They also made a tree of hands cut from construction paper. Crafts included bead making of bracelets and necklaces. The children made stained glass hands with tracing paper, glitter and pipe cleaners. The final craft was shaving cream painting. A good time was had by all.

Dave became very creative with his recreation ideas. The temperature was about 92 degrees. Water was used daily in every event. We loved a relay which was

dunking your head in water and running to the other end and squeezing the water out of your hair into a bucket and running back and forth again and again. It was a must to stay wet. Each day of recreation really did include water.

From Scripture came the following: “if it is hidden, bring it forth”, “you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light”, “give blessings”, and “all the children are welcome”.

Several guitars traveled with us, along with bongos and a flute. We enjoyed music in the vans and during vacation bible school. A daily routine for the kids included journaling in the mornings and an “image of the day” every evening. Lou and Al were our awesome cooks and also great support for our kids. We left Punca Creek on July 15<sup>th</sup> and drove to Rochester, MN. We joined a party at the Barnes and Noble for the release of the newest Harry Potter book. Six of our kids picked up their books at 12:30 a.m. The traditional foot washing took place in the small chapel of the beautiful Congregational UCC church ending at 4:22 a.m. There was silence in the vans most of the way home. Thank you all for your continued and tremendous support of the senior high youth group.

Kathy Hornbaker

### **LUNCH EVERYONE**

**OPEN PRAIRIE** will serve the Friday Lunch in the Park & Bake Sale at Soldiers & Sailors Park on August 26<sup>th</sup>. If you can help with planning, cooking, baking, serving, etc....please contact Kelly at 876-1106.

### **BUILDING TEAM**

Progress on the new building is coming along very well under the able watch of Dave Castner. The concrete is poured along the west side of the building, the ceiling grids are all in place, and the kitchen cabinets have been ordered. The ceiling lights for the sanctuary were defective upon arrival, and had to be shipped back. This has delayed progress for a couple of weeks since the ceiling can't be finished up until the lights are hung and wired.

The heating and air conditioning is all in place, so we can worship in air conditioned comfort whenever we get into the building. Once the lights get hung, the ceiling tiles (along with the insulation that will lie on top of the tiles) can be put in place. At that point, the air conditioning can be turned on, and we could start holding services in the building, even though not everything will be finished.

For now, we plan to live with the concrete floor as it is in the sanctuary. We will have a wood (bamboo, actually) floor laid when we can afford it.

### **PRAIRIE CIRCLE**

Prairie Circle meets the first Wednesday night of every month and has supper together. On August 3<sup>rd</sup> we will gather at Monical's Pizza at 6:00 p.m. This is open to all the women of Open Prairie and their pals. For more information call June Harmon at 872-4453.

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – August 2005 News

### SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The August small group gatherings will not take place as previously announced. Instead, we will focus our energies to the October sessions on the topic of perseverance. Please reserve October 12, 19, 26 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

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Illinois Conference UCC Women's Retreat, sponsored by Women in Church & Society, is set for September 30 to October 1 at Pilgrim Park. The retreat leader will be the Rev. Dr. Keran Olm-Stoelting. The theme for the weekend is "And Sarah Laughed"....looking at humor and wisdom in the Bible will no doubt be fun and we'll laugh a lot as well as learn.

Come join your sisters of faith for laughter, play, dance, song and explore the season of your life through humor!

Brochures with all the details are available on Sunday mornings at worship or by calling the church office at 659-3432.