

---

---

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

---

---

Beloved Community,

It is my hope that summer is bringing you all some needed respite and renewal. We have so much to look forward to as soon we will kick off new school year and the church will begin to bustle with fall activities. But, no need to panic, there is still some summer left and I mean not to hasten it to an end. However, as I shift into thinking about the next program year I want to be sure to pause to recap what this summer has already brought to my life.

Thanks to your generous support in allowing me the time to go to various locations throughout the country and sing my little heart out-I can say without reservation that the concert tour to promote "Draw the Circle Wide" and celebrate the ministry of Janie Spahr has gone smashingly well. Since the concert here at home, Katie and I have been to Atlanta, Northern and Southern CA, Philadelphia and out last stop will be Rochester, NY the middle of this month to meet Janie for her last official weekend as the Director of That All May Freely Serve ([www.TAMFS.org](http://www.TAMFS.org)).

I have continued to work on my Doctoral project and anticipate having a rough draft completed by the end of this month. I plan to complete my coursework by mid-January, so we are nearing the finish line but your continued prayers of support for the final stretch would be much appreciated.

Of course one of the high points of the summer was attending and participating in the fiftieth birthday celebration of our denomination at General Synod in Hartford CT.

Here are a couple of memorable moments: The Pre-synod New Church Gathering was inspiring! I heard stories of joy and struggle and shared our story, which is always a great privilege and happens to tickle me pink. In listening to other people share about their churches I heard commonality and felt a deep sense of camaraderie, which is important, as pioneering can be lonely work. What I heard said over and over again is that we as new

church start people are convinced "our vitality is contingent on the participation and ministry of each and every one of our members". We have always felt that to be true at OPUC and it was great to hear it echoed throughout the Synod gathering.

I was encouraged to learn that the UCC is committed to starting 250 new churches by 2011 and 1,600 by 2021. The comment was made by David Schoen, the National Evangelism and New Church Growth Team leader that, "The Spirit is alive and well where new churches are coming into being." He encouraged us to think of ourselves as a calling congregation yes, but also as a planting congregation.

One presentation that struck a chord in me encouraged us to commit ourselves to four objectives: Presence, Content, Mission, and Spirituality.

1. Presence-means being salt, being light, staying connected to the struggle of God's people in the world.
2. Context-means maintaining a critical engagement with the questions of our faith.
3. Mission-means being a constant resource and witness to peace, Justice and Shalom.
4. Spirituality- means caring for the soul and teaching that God is within us, God is with us, and God is beyond us.

Once Synod was off and running, I joined almost 9000 other people in learning about <http://i.ucc.org/>, an online community designed to support our faith lives through the week with online scripture study, live streaming prayer sessions, and chat rooms. Over 1,300 people have connected with each other through this online vehicle designed to support both folks who have a church home and those who are looking. Check it out for yourselves.

I visited the Health Ministries booth, connecting with people from all over the nation who are putting an emphasis on ministry to people with disabilities and creating vibrant health ministries. What joy and pride I have knowing

that OPUCC is growing stronger in that area. I brought home great resources.

I attended the Coalition Luncheon, witnessing Ann B. Day's retirement and hearing about the steady increase of ONA congregations across the nation-more churches have become ONA in the last two years than ever before. That was exciting news!

I was impressed by our Minister and President John Thomas' sermon challenging us to know why we are here as the national and local church. He charged that we continue to be radical forces of change in our communities and in the world. I encourage you to read his sermon online if you are able- there are also copies available at church. Online go to [www.UCC.org](http://www.UCC.org) and look under Synod at the "most memorable speeches". It is worth the effort.

And last but certainly not least, it was with great joy in our hearts that we celebrated Kelly Autrey-Webber as our Lay Woman of the Year. Congratulations again Kelly.

Thanks to all of you for supporting your five OPUCC representatives to Synod, I know the experience will continue to enrich our lives as we seek to live out our faith together in community.

Enjoy the remainder of the summer and remember to praise God for all that is good in the world and in our lives,

*Rev. Curran Reichert*

## AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS

---

Aug. 3	6:00 pm	Slow Food Night
Aug. 8	8:00 am	Prayer Group at Autrey's
Aug. 9	6:00 pm	Choir at Webber's
Aug. 12	6:30 pm	Youth Group/Monical's
Aug. 15	8:00 am	Prayer Group at Autrey's
Aug. 16	6:00 pm	Choir at Webber's
Aug. 17	7:30 am	Church reserved-Red Cross
Aug. 21	6:00 pm	Worship Team Mtg.
Aug. 22	8:00 am	Prayer Group at Autrey's
Aug. 23	6:00 pm	Choir at Webber's
Aug. 26	11:00 am	Church Council
Aug. 26	9:00 am	All ages trip to Magic Waters
Aug. 29	8:00 am	Prayer Group at Autrey's
Aug. 30	6:00 pm	Choir at Webber's

---

## Stewardship and Finance

Congratulations are again in order for the folks at Open Prairie. Because of your generous spirit, Open Prairie has been recognized by the United Church of Christ as a *5 for 5 Church* in 2006. This means that we fully supported Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). We gave to Basic Support and all four special mission offerings throughout the year: *One Great Hour of Sharing*, *Strengthen the Church*, *Neighbors in Need*, and *The Christmas Fund*. So far this year we have contributed \$3,154.47 to OCWM. I hope you feel good about sharing your abundance because this "happy money" is doing God's mission in the world.

See you in church,  
Patricia Wilson

---

## THANK YOU!!!

Dear Friends at Open Prairie UCC,

I can't thank you enough for the incredible support and love you have surrounded me with during my 12 years of mission trips. I have been so blessed to be a part of the Jr. High and Sr. High Youth Groups. What a treat it has been to share with them and listen to their stories. I have enjoyed it all from the bottom of my heart

*"Every Step of the Way."*

Sincerely,  
Kathy Hornbaker

---

## A Letter from Margo Bertram

Greetings to you, my Open Prairie family,

It has been far too long since I have last joined in worship with you. My visits to the greater-Princeton area have grown fewer and fewer as my new job has demanded more of my time and energy. And now that

my mother has retired from a full career as a special educator, she and my dad (who retired last year) have moved to Bluffton, South Carolina to start the next big adventure in their life together. I suppose that in many ways, this leaves me without a home in my “hometown.” Yet, I know I will always have a home at Open Prairie, and as luck would have it, a number of church brothers and sisters with an extra bed. I am writing you today to express my deepest thanks for sponsoring me to represent you at this year’s General Synod in Hartford. To some who do not know me so well, it might have seemed pointless to sponsor a church member who spends so little of her time in this church, town, and wider community. But let me assure you that my passion for the ministry done by Curran and this congregation has not waned in my absence, and through my participation at Synod, I have likewise strengthened my pride in the work done by our denomination at large. The Synod experience provided me with the opportunity to meet new people, engage in discussion critical to the wider church as well as our local church, and to reconnect and rejoice in the company of four beloved Open Prairie women who bless us all with their work and commitment to their faith and the life of the church.

Sometimes it is easy to get wrapped up in my day-to-day life and forget how truly miraculous Open Prairie’s existence is. I fear that I may sometimes take for granted the comfort and strength I feel as a result of my identification with this community. This sometimes results in complacency. I have returned from the Synod experience emboldened in my belief that Open Prairie not only offers something unique to its members, but it also offers something important to the wider community. I have been reminded that it is not and should not be enough for me to feel comfortable and content in this congregation, but I should also aspire to bring more and more brothers and sisters into this community that is so special, supportive, and renewing. I should desire to reach out to more people, to make them feel just as comfortable, and to help nourish them wherever they are on life’s journey.

In addition to my full time position as a hall director at Lawrence University, I also fill a one-third time position as the campus health and wellness programs coordinator. As such, I value all types of wellness, including spiritual wellness. And while I recognize that not everyone feels that discussing God and Jesus Christ is their path or calling, I do not think that this should be a barrier to participation in a church. This must sound strange, but hear me out. For a long time, I did not believe that I wanted to have anything to do with religion. I did not feel I needed to be involved in a faith community to be a “whole” person. What drew me in to Hampshire Colony in the “old days” was simply the

invitation of a few close friends. I attended irregularly for the fellowship. What drew me in to Open Prairie was a search for understanding in a place where I did not feel anyone could possibly understand or accept me. These were secular, if not completely selfish, reasons for attending church. But once I was in the door, I found religion very quickly. I was never quite sure how I perceived God and my relationship with Her until I found Her in the smiles, hands, words, and embraces of those who gathered in community here. Unfortunately, God did not get me in the doors of OPUCC, but it was God who has embraced me here, as many of you have likewise found.

Therefore, my greatest priority in the wake of Synod, and as a long-distance member of this church, is to help develop a plan to reach out to those in our wider community who are searching, but do not know what they seek. I think it will be important in the coming months to reach out to each other by learning to support one another as we go through life’s trials because we are now capable of doing so. We have been battered and bruised, but the result of that has been the growth of a capacity to lead in us all. And when I say that, I do not just mean those who have felt a call to committee membership or ministry. My interaction with this dynamic community has made me stronger and confident in my ability to help others, to reach out, and to engage in and lead meaningful dialogue in our midst. I have learned that we are and must continue to be a congregation that asks “What can I do next?” not, “What can you do for me?”

What is more, we must reach out to secular groups and skeptics of the church. We must get them in the four walls of this beautiful building of ours, allow them to participate in purely secular activities, to show those who are not so sure about God that we will still welcome them into our presence. This will allow us to draw people in and perhaps it is then that they will find God as I did.

We must also build more fellowship among members of our congregation who we do not include as often as we should. The most important group to my mind is actually the least marginalized group in the wider sense: adult white males. Believe it or not, there are plenty of ways for guys to be in communion with each other without discussing scripture or getting in touch with their feelings (not that those are bad things, but I think you understand where I’m going with this). We must widen our embrace so that we may continue to enrich our community and avoid becoming complacent and self-satisfied.

Once again, I must extend my deepest thanks to you all for your support and prayers while I represented you at

Synod. Further, I must thank Curran for encouraging me to be a representative for this community I love so dearly, and for considering my suggestions, opinions, and feelings as I have prepared, experienced, and reflected on this experience and many others. Once again, you have all extended me an extraordinary welcome, and I encourage you to continue this practice with others you may not yet know, as I believe we have many brothers and sisters we have not yet met.

## **CHRISTIAN ED**

---

### *What's happening in Christian Ed?*

#### Sunday school Teachers for August:

Aug. 5: Wendy  
Aug. 12: Kathy  
Aug. 19: Dawn  
Aug. 26: Wendy

2. Sunday School continues to meet for all ages during the regularly scheduled worship time. All are encouraged to attend. Beginning in September there will be a separate Sunday School Class designed specifically for the 4th-6th graders which will meet at 9:30 a.m. in the Youth Room just off of the sanctuary. Watch for more information regarding this class as the time gets closer.

3. Confirmation will begin again in September. We will be changing the format some and will only be meeting once a month. A schedule of meetings will be sent out, please watch for them and let Wendy know if you have not received your schedule by August 20th!

4. *Just a reminder.* We are continuing to recycle ink jet cartridges. All proceeds are used to help fund the younger youth going to camp. If you are unable to help by recycling I would encourage you to feel free to make a donation towards the cause as we try to assist each youth by scholarshiping the families \$50 a piece. If you have any questions about how you can get involved in the camper scholarship program please talk with Wendy.

5. Senior High Youth Group will meet on August 12th at Monicals Pizza at 6:30 p.m. We will be planning our year's events and catching up with each other. Bring your friends and plan to attend. There is a special surprise given to anyone who brings a friend to the meeting.

6. A special thank you once again to Kathy Hornbaker for all of her service in working with and running the Senior High Youth Program. If you missed the celebration on July 15th, you really missed a good time. Thanks to everyone who participated in the worship service and the picnic. It was fantastic to see so many new and old faces gathered in Kathy's honor.

7. The next 20's - 30's group gathering will happen on Friday, August 24th. The time and location are yet to be set. If you have any suggestions on what you would like to do or where you would like to go, please let Wendy know ASAP, otherwise more info will be out soon.

### BACK BAY MISSION WORK TRIP

Back Bay Mission Work Trip to continue helping to rebuild the Hurricane Katrina ravaged areas of Biloxi, MS is scheduled for Sept. 30 - Oct. 6. There are a limited number of spots available. Please sign-up on the bulletin board in the lobby of the church or call Ami at the church office to reserve your space. We can only take 14 people so don't wait too long to get your name on that list! This will be Open Prairie's third work trip to help Hurricane Katrina victims.

### TOTAL IMMERSION WORSHIP

#### *a.k.a Magic Waters Waterpark Trip*

All are invited to attend, but those going back to school are especially encouraged to attend. We will be celebrating the end of summer by going to Magic Waters Waterpark in Rockford, IL on Sunday August 26th. We will leave the church at 9:00 a.m. and will plan to return by 5:30 p.m. The cost for the day trip is \$12.50 per person to get into the park and then if you want any extra snacks or souvenirs you might wish to bring \$5 or so more. We will be taking coolers with water, snacks, juice, and our sack lunches. A large group went last year and it was a ton of fun. Please RSVP to Ami or Wendy about whether or not you plan to attend no later than August 20th so that appropriate transportation arrangements can be made. Bring a friend and come play all day at a park that is sure to be a ton of fun for all!

## MISSION TEAM

*Greetings from the Mission Team,*  
Wow! What a summer it has been! The Harry Potter festival, Festival 9 3/4 was a wild success. As most of you know the festival is the Mission Team's primary fundraiser for the year. Starting in May, Adam made chocolate frogs, rats, grims, and lightning bolts. In the end he made 1,416 delectable wizard chocolates. That is a lot of chocolate. Thank you Adam for taking 99 pounds of chocolate and creating magic. When you see Margaret give her a big hug for she has spent weeks tirelessly painting the enormous flats that are the background at Honeydukes Sweet Shop. They were stunning and created the perfect magical world of wizard treats. Hats off to Mimi and Angie who spent hours creating hundreds of ruby skull lollipops which were marvelous. This year I was a little over extended (fancy that) organizing a few other events at the festival so Susan H. stepped in and took over a lot of the prep work, errand running, and shopping. It takes many many jugs of soda and ice cream to make that much dragon snot and butter beer. Thank you Susan and Evan for all your hard work. My deep thanks goes out to all of you who baked such wonderful goodies. They made an impressive show and we sold everything you made. Last of all, I am more grateful than I can say to all of you who came to work in Honeydukes. You were magnificent! There is nothing quite like Open Prairie folk coming together on a project. Thanks everybody!

Open Prairie folk were present elsewhere at the festival. We sponsored the very popular Harry Potter Trivia Contest manned ably by Ami and Rex Chamberlain dressed in wizard robes who almost lost their voices asking eager contestants questions for hours. Ron M. turned the entire courthouse into the Ministry of Magic which was a major attraction at the festival. Open Prairie also joined forces with Perry Memorial Hospital to help them create St

Mungos Hospital for wizarding maladies.

Bravo to all!

Thanks to everyone who came to our Jubilee Sunday service. We had a lovely worship service followed by a work session in which the kitchen was reorganized and thoroughly cleaned, windows were washed, the garden weeded, the bench in the entryway stained, and the choir platforms painted. Whew! That's a lot of work done in record time. Well done everyone!

Another project we are working on is providing the background flats for Freedom House's fundraiser which will take place in the fall. Margaret A. is painting a barn scene for their country music hoedown.

We hope you all will attend Ron's Slow Food night on August 3rd. Mimi Cofoid of our Health Ministries Team will be the featured guest speaker. We will prepare our delicious meal, listen to Mimi, and EAT! This is a wonderful evening of fellowship and another way in which we can support our community's efforts to learn more about sustainable living.

There is delicious Fairly Traded coffee and tea on display in the foyer and each month Susan will be putting in a fresh order. Thanks Susan for this ministry.

Thanks for keeping the food pantry in mind. The Mission Team donates a box of fresh organic produce each week in Open Prairie's name. This month they are asking us to donate shampoo, bath soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes as well.

*Peace to you all. Kelly*

## ☺HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAYS!☺

---

August 1	Barb Schiff
August 3	Linda Ernst
August 4	Mary Davidson
August 6	Thomas Jones
August 8	Travis Olson
August 12	Alice Beneke
August 14	Stephanie Hale
August 16	Terry Williams
August 19	Becky Perkins
August 19	Ben Fisher
August 19	Ashley Kasperski
August 20	Sue Stumpf
August 23	Jared Jagers
August 24	Suzie Stalter
August 25	Jana Allott

August 27 Scott Roberts  
August 28 Steve Matthews  
August 29 Lou Zearing

Note: if you have any additions or corrections, please let Ami know.

---

## UPCOMING EVENTS

---

### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NIGHT

OPUCC is looking forward to having Christian Education Night each Tuesday evening this fall. Two different classes will be offered consecutively, starting Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 – 9:00 pm. and will run until December 18<sup>th</sup>. Adam Webber will be teaching a 12 week class on “The Heart of Christianity” and Rev. Reichert will teach a 5 week class on Prayer and a 7 week class on the 7 sorrows of Mary titled “Your Sorrow is My Sorrow: Hope and Strength in times of Suffering”. More information will be available in the September newsletter.

### OPUCC 4<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Mark your calendar for our 4<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in September. There will a special event TBA on Saturday, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> and the Rev. Dr. Dow Edgerton, Academic Dean at Chicago Theological Seminary will preach on Sunday, Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>. We will also have special guest Jorge Morales, Associate Conference Minister in the Illinois Conference worshipping with us.

---

### INKJET RECYCLING PROGRAM!!!

The OPUCC Sunday School Youth are now collecting empty inkjet cartridges for recycling. We receive up to \$4.00 for each cartridge recycled. Cartridges can be deposited in our collection bin located underneath the bench in the lobby area.

Simply place your old cartridge in a plastic sandwich bag and deposit it in our collection bin. Most businesses simply throw their empty cartridges in the garbage so check at work to see if they would donate their would be garbage. Please note that no large laser cartridges are accepted with this program.

**A list of accepted cartridges is available in the church office.**

---

## Fellowship News

---

### SLOW FOOD NIGHT

The third Slow Food night will be September 7 (yes, it's Homestead Weekend). We'll gather at 6 pm in the OPUCC kitchen, to make a simple meal--menu still being determined, but the focus will be on food and spirituality. Dinner will be served at approximately 7:30 pm--if you can't help prepare, but want to join us for dinner and clean-up, you are quite welcome! If enough people are interested, we'll play board games after dinner (bring your family favorites).

---

## PLEASE REMEMBER:

\*Summer Worship will be at 9:30 am during the month of August.

---



HAVE A FUN  
AUGUST!



Open Prairie UCC  
25 E. Marion Street  
Princeton, IL 61356

## **CHURCH CONTACTS**

---

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 church phone  
(815) 872-1515 home phone  
revreichert@openprairie.org

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

---