

Greetings from Martha

Where the Sidewalk Ends

Shel Silverstein said it well a generation ago in his wonderful poem

"Where the Sidewalk Ends:"

There is a place where the sidewalk ends
 And before the street begins,
 And there the grass grows soft and white,
 And there the sun burns crimson bright,
 And there the moon-bird rests from his flight
 To cool in the peppermint wind.
 Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black
 And the dark street winds and bends.
 Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow
 We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
 And watch where the chalk-white arrows go
 To the place where the sidewalk ends.
 Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
 And we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go,
 For the children, they mark, and the children, they know
 The place where the sidewalk ends.

I have been a frequent walker since I was a child. And Gracie, my fifty-something-pound, lab mix dog and I take several long walks a day. In this first month in Princeton, we have wandered onto some of your front lawns and met a few of you as you amble about town. One of the things that is very different for us as we walk in Princeton is that the sidewalk literally ends *often*. When walking in a large city like Saint Louis, one goes from this block to the next almost always on a paved pathway. But such is not the case in Princeton. There are places where there is a walk only on one side of the street. There are streets where the walk switches back and forth from one side to the other. On some streets the sidewalk ends at an intersection while on other streets, the sidewalk comes to a halt right smack in the middle of the block. There are even blocks where it ends more than once in the same block. The first few walking days here, when Gracie and I were trying out various walking routes, I would stop and try to make sense of why the sidewalk ceased right there in front of me and not down several houses or in the next block. The logic of it all never became clear, so I started listening to the reality of "where the

sidewalk ends." I remembered Silverstein's poem and I thought about the church.

What does it mean for us at Open Prairie to be a household of faith that walks beyond the place where the sidewalk ends? How hard is it to keep moving off the paved pathway where others have trod regularly? Are we somehow shifting the rules and regulations when we keep on going well after the terminal point of the established sidewalk? I don't imagine there were many sidewalks in ancient Palestine. And if there had been, it's hard for me to believe that Jesus would have been one who only stuck to the given sidewalk. Reading Silverstein's poem again, I think of those stories in the gospels where Jesus reminds us that living into the realm of God requires the wisdom and the way of a child. Jesus and Silverstein knew that the children were aware of the importance of where the sidewalk ends.

The metaphor of walking in faith is a common one that we use. Ponder with me this month what it means to take that walk and to walk that talk way past where the sidewalk ends. We won't know everything that is coming. We will find ourselves beyond our prior comfort zone. We will always be en route. We will be people relying on that bread for the journey promised by guidance, grace, and goodness so much greater than ourselves. Let's keep taking a walk where the sidewalk ends. *Martha*

New Members to Be Received

We will be receiving new members at Open Prairie on Sunday, September 7. If you are interested in becoming a member of the church at this time please let Martha know or leave a message in the church office.

Mark Your Calendars

In worship on September 7 we will acknowledge both this interim time and the fifth anniversary of Open Prairie. The day's worship will include communion and reception of new members. A pot luck meal will follow. Further details will be shared in upcoming worship services and the September newsletter.

AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug. 6	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Aug. 7	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's
Aug. 9		Habitat for Humanity Lunch
Aug. 12		Ami-Vacation day
Aug. 12	5:30 pm	Christian Ed Team Mtg.
Aug. 13	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Aug. 14	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's
Aug. 16	9am-9pm	Church reserved Brown-Martin Reception
Aug. 19	6:30 pm	Worship Team Mtg.
Aug. 20	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Aug. 21	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's
Aug. 24	8:30 am	Water Park Trip
Aug. 25	7:00 pm	Church Council Mtg.
Aug. 27	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Aug. 28	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's

Stewardship and Finance

I recently attended a three day study in Elgin on Native Americans – where they have been, where they are now, and where they are going. The title of the study book, *Giving Our Hearts Away*, indicates one of the most important spiritual values shared by Native people. Simply put, it is not important what you are able to acquire, but what you are able to give away. Generosity is the rule of behavior. No one was turned away who needed food or a place to sleep; no one had extra, but no one did without if there was anything to share.

Giving is circular. God is the source of every element of life and supplies all that sustains and nourishes. Among Native Americans there is generally a widespread understanding that we own nothing. Therefore, we give away those things that are needed by others as God gives all that we need. Native people who live according to traditional values are involved and engaged with each other and the world around them.

So it was with early Christians. So it is with many Christians today. What about us? God is still speaking. Spread the love.

Patricia Wilson, Chairman

Prairie Circle News

The next meeting of Prairie Circle will be in September.

PLEASE NOTE:

Prairie Circle will be in charge of the Prairie View Birthday Party in Sept. Plans will be made at the September meeting.

THANK YOU!

Thanks to everyone at Open Prairie who signed up to provide food for the Habitat for Humanity lunch on August 9th.

Thanks, also, to everyone who signed up to donate supplies to the Church World Service disaster relief buckets. Supplies are still needed to fill the buckets. Please sign up in the church office.

☺ HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAY ☺

Aug. 1	Barb Schiff
Aug. 3	Linda Ernst
Aug. 4	Mary Davidson
Aug. 10	David Gray
Aug. 12	Alice Beneke
Aug. 14	Stephanie Hale
Aug. 19	Becky Perkins
Aug. 19	Ben Fisher
Aug. 19	Ashley Kasperski
Aug. 20	Sue Stumpf
Aug. 23	Jared Jagers
Aug. 24	Suzie Stalter
Aug. 25	Jana Allott
Aug. 27	Scott Roberts
Aug. 28	Sherri Henneberry
Aug. 29	Lou Zearing

Church Council News

The next Church Council Meeting will be Monday, August 25th, 7:00 pm.

Mission News

GREETINGS FROM YOUR MISSION TEAM

A **huge** thank you to everyone who helped with our Honey Dukes Sweet Shop during the Harry Potter Festival. The numbers aren't all in as of yet, but we are looking at least \$1000 to go toward mission and outreach at Open Prairie! Thanks again for a great team effort!

Our mission team continues to offer Equal Exchange fairly traded coffee, teas, and chocolates. These items are available at Open Prairie. You may also contact Susan (815) 646-4118 to order a case (6 bags) of your favorite coffee! Remember, your purchase helps small farmers develop coops all over the world. You are also contributing to Open Prairie's mission and outreach!

Your mission team invites you to explore the United Church of Christ's website at www.ucc.org. Here you can read about all mission opportunities by clicking the tab "Change the World"; then "Take Action" in the pop-up menu; choose "Justice and Witness Ministries" to read the latest UCC news, disaster responses, and "US Midwest Flooding and Tornadoes volunteer opportunities". Please see me if you are interested in volunteering for one of these projects.

I would also recommend a wonderful daily e-mail meditation opportunity through www.ucc.org and the God is Still Speaking campaign. Go to www.ucc.org; click on the top left tab "411"; click "God is Still Speaking" on the pop-up menu box; then click on "Virtual

Community". From there click the big red words "Subscribe to Our Free e-mail Meditation". This is a daily e-mail that includes a bible verse, a brief reflection and a prayer. I look forward to this e-mail each day! It speaks to me where I am on my faith journey! I hope you give it a try!

Thanks to everyone who contributes to our local food pantry. This month the food pantry is asking for Shampoo, toothpaste/toothbrushes and bath soap.

Peace,
Susan Hale

FOOD PANTRY FOR AUGUST:

Shampoo, Bath Soap & toothpaste/toothbrushes



Prayers Offered

Our prayers are with Mimi Cofoid in this season of her recovery from surgery.

We also hold Dan Kuhnert in prayer. Dan is currently incarcerated short term in Joliet. Once his permanent placement is established for the next 18-21 months, we will publish his address, so that members of the congregation can stay in touch with him during this challenging time.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY **MISSION OPPORTUNITY**

Open Prairie will be providing food and drinks for the work crew at the Habitat for Humanity project in Princeton on Saturday, August 9th. A sign-up sheet is available at the church office or contact Marcie Jagers

thejaggers@comcast.net or 815-875-8034
for more information.

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**Small Groups to be Starting**

During September, two small groups will begin meeting at Open Prairie. There will be a weekly scripture study group based on a curriculum that Martha is writing called *Enough at the Table (EAT)*. This group will provide an opportunity to explore scripture texts for the following Sunday, to engage your own creativity, and to participate in spiritual practice.

The second group will meet monthly to explore various images of what it means to be church, who we are and who we are becoming. We will utilize a few books, several movies, and some delightful children's stories to push out the boundaries of who we understand ourselves to be as faith community and how we are growing as an expression of the body of Christ.

Specific details for both of these groups will take shape during August and be announced in worship and in the September newsletter.

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Christian Education

A Note from Christian Education:

The next CE Team meeting will be August 12th at 5:30 p.m. This is a change from the originally scheduled date, please make note that of that.

Back to School Blowout Waterpark Trip!! All youth young and old are encouraged to participate in the annual waterpark trip scheduled for August 24th. The group will leave the church at 8:30 a.m. and will return to the church by 5:00 p.m. Magic waters Waterpark in Rockford, Illinois is the final destination for the day. Permission slips and trip details will be available after August 3rd. Watch for more info!!!!

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**Congratulations**

Open Prairie's love and rejoicing are extended to Wendy Brown and Karen Martin. Wendy and

Karen celebrated their wedding ceremony in Taos, California on July 27, 2008.

**Think Globally, Act Locally**

As some of you may already know, I recently started a group in Princeton focused on the issue of making our community one that is more environmentally conscious. I am an Environmental Studies major currently at Knox College in Galesburg, IL and thus, ardently interested in all of the issues surrounding the current climate situation. Through my studies I have developed the belief that if I want change to happen globally it must begin first personally as well as locally.

So to make a long story short, I posted fliers downtown and had a friend write an article for the BCR and found myself in the midst of about twenty people at 7pm on the night of June 19<sup>th</sup>. I was pleasantly surprised to see the faces that attended, some of them new, some of them familiar and expected, some of them familiar and unexpected! Our own Kelly Webber actually postponed her vacation a day in order to attend the first meeting (Thanks, Kelly!).

The first meeting was a general discussion to see what people where interested in and what they saw as needing to be changed in Princeton. We discussed many topics. Public transportation and the issue of bike-accessibility was one of the primary topics. Why are there no bike racks in town? How can we make it safer and easier for children to walk/bike to school, for adults to walk/bike to work? We also discussed water quality, energy forms, and recycling- recycling also being a main topic. What do we do with things such as old computers, burned out CFL's (compact fluorescent lightbulbs), old paints, etc? Could we, as a group, create ways for people to recycle or safely decompose of those items? We also discussed local recycling and found that we really didn't understand the many logistics of the system, deciding that we would try to get someone who did know about those things at the next meeting.

The second meeting took place July 8<sup>th</sup> at the BCR building and included some faces from the first meeting as well as many new faces! I was unable to get someone from the recycling center to be at the meeting but many new

things were discussed. We primarily discussed the topic of local foods as eating locally is a key way to reduce one's ecological footprint. But, most importantly, we also began to focus a bit more on what we, as a group, wanted to act on. The key thing that we decided needs to be done is for there to be some form of education on these topics coming to people regularly. A monthly column in the BCR was discussed, with various members writing articles on topics of their interest or particular specialty. This idea is in the works and, hopefully, will be in action soon!

The third meeting has yet to occur but will have taken place by the time this is printed. After that, it will be only a couple weeks before I must return to school. My goal for this summer was to take some form of action but, even if that hasn't happened, I am reassured that the discussion and ideas that have come out of these meetings have been well worth the time and energy. Hopefully though, some of Princeton's residents will be more eager to push to create a community more conscious of its footprint on this Earth.

*Peace, Creal Zearing*

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Thank You to Wendy

It is with sadness and joy that we bid Wendy Brown farewell as the Director of Christian Education at Open Prairie. Wendy has been in this position throughout Open Prairie's young life. She has been a generous spirit, a hard worker, and a persistent lover of the children and youth of the congregation. We are both sad to say good bye and also joyful with her about new opportunities and adventures in her life. Sunday, August 3 will be Wendy's last Sunday with us as a member of the staff at Open Prairie. Her ministry will be acknowledged in worship that day. Please plan to be here to join in thanking her.

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**Lunch in the Park**

Sarah Cooper and Steve Gunning are organizing the OPUCC **Lunch in the Park** for Friday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>. A Volunteer sign-up sheet will be available in the church office in the next week or so. Be sure to sign-up to help with this important Open Prairie project.

**Open Prairie August Calendar of Prayer**

Starting with this issue of the newsletter, we will have a daily calendar of prayer that we share as a congregation. The prayer particulars for our calendar will be periodically gathered in worship. They may be joys, concerns, blessings, people, places, events, hopes, dreams, fears, yearnings, etc. If you are not able to be at worship and have prayers that you would like included in a future month of the calendar, send them to Martha at the Open Prairie office. Please pause at some point each day during the month to participate in our daily prayer. Thank you to all who contributed to the Calendar of Prayer's origins on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

During that morning service we heard together the text from Romans 8 with its abiding promise of the Spirit which "intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

**August Calendar of Prayer**

- 1 – for damaged trees struggling to survive
- 2 – for understanding, discussion, and compassion among all races
- 3 – for people in career transitions
- 4 – for children everywhere
- 5 – for people who are alone and on the streets
- 6 – for all those returning to school in August
- 7 – for any who are without health insurance
- 8 – for victims of floods, tornados, hurricanes, and other storms
- 9 – for Habitat volunteers
- 10 – for those in public office
- 11 – for more patience to deal with the daily challenges of life
- 12 – for those who have misplaced their song
- 13 – for mothers and babies during difficult times in pregnancy
- 14 – for families fractured by substance abuse
- 15 – for those who fear anyone who is different from them
- 16 – for people of the Middle East
- 17 – for those facing issues of mental illness
- 18 – for friends, old and new
- 19 – for struggles around organizing financial priorities
- 20 – for caregivers
- 21 – for those who are imprisoned
- 22 – for our families, however we define them
- 23 – for any recovering from surgery
- 24 – for adults dealing with elderly parents
- 25 – for the people of Darfur
- 26 – for homeless or abused animals
- 27 – for students heading off to college for the first time
- 28 – for single parents
- 29 – for the relief of old angers
- 30 – for highway construction workers
- 31 – for those engaged in clean up efforts, rebuilding homes and lives

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