

## CHRISTIAN ED

Confirmation News. 6 bubbly youth - Paydon Aronson, Abby Beneke, Olivia Bettasso, Evan Hale, John Zearing Sallee Zearing, along with Kathy Hornbaker and Bill Beneke traveled to Chicago on November 11 for a World Religion Tour. We visited a Buddhist Mediation Center, and Islamic Foundation, the Congregational Etz Chaim – a Jewish Synagogue, and a Hindu Temple. We practiced a very slow walking meditation, visited an Islamic grade school and observed the Islam worship, viewed the script written on the Torah, and visited 13 shrines each having an icon that is worshipped daily. Food stops at The Patio and Chilis are always an adventure. Upcoming events – Mission project in December helping Toys for Tots, a visit to St. Bede, Mentors and the Confirmands begin meeting January and continue through May.

The Confirmation youth respond to the question, "What is God?"



- awesome power*
- a belief*
- a creator*
- firewood & matches*
- faith*
- the moon*
- love*

The Sr. High youth group experienced a fun outing in Chicago on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Seven youth; Tom Beneke, Jared Bartman, Carl Carman, Creal Zearing, Nick Forristall, Tony McCombs, Stephanie Hale and guest Molly Hornbaker with drivers Rich & Kathy Hornbaker shared the day together. Our first stop was the Art Institute, always a cultural highlight. Next stop was the Lincoln Park Zoo. The tigers and lions were pacing. The monkeys are always entertaining and those who can tolerate slinky creatures visited the reptile house. We had a delicious meal at the Flat Top Grill, grilling together everything from pineapples, sprouts, rice, cucumbers and fish

to tomatoes, noodles, chicken, mandarin oranges and more. We then traveled to the Neo Futurists Theater to experience Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind – 30 plays in 60 minutes. We drove to IMSA to drop off Carl and invited ourselves to Joe Zearing's room. The ride home was quiet. Upcoming events- luncheon fundraiser, cookie making and sale, round table talks, caroling.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CALL TO CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:** Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> following 10:30 a.m. worship. The Church Council calls a special congregational meeting to vote on extending a call to Rev. Curran Reichert to be pastor of Open Prairie United Church of Christ. The Search Committee with the Council's support has recommended Rev. Reichert. Persons will be eligible to vote who have indicated their intention to become charter members of Open Prairie United Church of Christ by the time of the meeting.

**THE STAR CHART** and Victor's monthly news of the skies will be available for you to pick up at church on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month

**THANKS AND RECOGNITION** go out to two groups of volunteers have completed their prescribed duties. We would like to recognize the members of the Steering Committee and the Mission Statement Committee for their contributions to Open Prairie UCC: Kelly Autrey-Webber, Beth Bickerman, Al Forristall, Rich Hornbaker, Bob Ivey, Courtney Sapp, Suzie Stalter, Karyn Vaughn, Hazel Crain, Paul Ernst, and Lou Zearing. Thanks again!

**AN INVITATION.** The Sheffield United Church of Christ extends an invitation to our members to attend their "Community Coffee" Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup>, at the United Church of Christ Hall in Sheffield between 7:00 to 10:00 am. They are featuring fresh baked cinnamon rolls!

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – December 2003 News

### WORSHIP TEAM

---

We Send Our Thanks To:

- Rev. Prudence Yagmin who helped lead us through the wilderness.
- Adam Webber who delights us with music and served as lay minister.
- Ron McCutchan and the members of choir for providing inspirational music.
- Wendy Croisant for helping us get settled into the chapel.
- Mary Forristall for the lovely Advent cloths.

And A Warm Welcome To:

- Our Interim Minister, Rev. Gene Kraus, who affirms and challenges us to recognize God's grace and mercy."

### ADVENT NOTES:

We need each of you, your talents and gifts to take this journey into Advent and joyful Incarnation that is Christmas.

- Wear blue for the Sundays in Advent.
- Pick up your cards for the theme of the week after each service for the following week. Complete the card and hang it on the tree during the service. Cards will also be available preceding worship.
- Nov 30 – Hope As you enter this advent season, what is your Hope for Open Prairie UCC, for yourself or the world?
- Dec 7 – Peace Who do you wish Peace for? Where is Peace needed in your life? Where is peace needed in the world?
- Dec 14 – Joy What gives you Joy? Make a Joyful noise! Make a Joyful thing!
- Dec 21 – Love How will you pass on God's Love this Advent season? Where do you see God's Love entering your life?
- Dec 21 - Please bring a gift of a poinsettia to yourself and our church to adorn the chapel. You can take it home after this service or leave it for Christmas Eve. Take it home or give it to a friend!
- Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Celebration We are planning a candlelight service of Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve at 7pm at Pilgrim Park. Please bring candles!

### MISSION

---

On Sunday, October 5, \$321 was received during a special collection for Neighbors In Need. Thank you for your generosity!

#### **An Opportunity for Local Mission Outreach:**

**When:** Thursday, December 11 any time from 2:00 p.m. into the evening.

**Who:** Christmas Toys for Tots sponsored by United Way

**Where:** Princeton Police Department office

**What:** Volunteers are needed to sort donations and various other tasks to complete this local outreach to needy families. Pizza will be provided for volunteers. There is a sign-up sheet at church or contact the church office to volunteer. You can speak to Don Schiff if you would like more information.

This is a great opportunity for Open Prairie folks to reach out in the local community. Hope you can help! Thanks!

### STEWARDSHIP

---

Generous "start-up" giving has allowed us to get up and running without having to worry about overdrawing the account.

Pledges for 2004 are very encouraging. Pledges for local are approximately \$54,000, with around \$2500 having been pledged for wider mission. These figures show that we have a strong group of people committed to Open Prairie and its mission in our community. Now, we simply need to make the church grow. This will only happen if we make it happen, by extending personal invitations to friends and acquaintances to come and see what the excitement is all about.

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – December 2003 News

### SEARCH COMMITTEE

---

Greetings from your Search Committee. Last Sunday in church, Gene announced our choice of candidate for pastor of Open Prairie. We feel strongly that Rev. Reichert with her energy, creativity, and vision is a terrific match for us as a new church start. We will be voting to extend a call to Rev. Reichert in church on December 7<sup>th</sup>. Hope to see you there.

Peace, Kelly

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All Sundays\* in December:

9:15 am pick-up for Sunday School

9:30 am Sunday School @ Pilgrim Park

10:30 am Worship @ Pilgrim Park

\*no Sunday School on 12/28

12/2 6:30 pm Stewardship at Gene's

12/3 7:00 pm Christian Ed at Zearing's

12/7 Congregational Meeting after worship

Hot Chicken Casserole Luncheon

Youth group cookie bake

12/11 6:30 pm choir rehearsal at Webber's

12/14 Christmas Pageant

Cookie sale

12/18 6:30 pm rehearsal at Webbers

12/21 Bring a poinsettia to church

All Church Christmas Caroling

12/24 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Service

### GREETER/USHER SCHEDULE

12/7 Ray, Carol & Dan Kuhnert

12/14 Beth Bickerman & Sally Jacobson

12/21 Don & Barb Schiff

12/28 Hal & Margaret Autrey

### CORRESPONDENCE

---

*Dear Friends of Open Prairie Church,*

*This comes to let you know you continue in my thoughts and prayers as you continue the adventure of becoming a new church in your community.*

*I also want to thank you for the generous Neighbors in Need offering – not only for the actual dollars, though they are appreciated, but also for this sign of your intentions to be full supporters of all that we are as the United Church of Christ. (I'll bet you will become one of our 50+ "5 for 5" congregations that give to all 4 UCC offerings plus Our Church's Wider Mission!)*

*I look forward to joining you in worship sometime in the near future. May God bless you with joy as you serve Jesus Christ!*

*Blessings,*

*Jane Fisler Hoffman*

*Illinois Conference Minister*

*Dear Members of Open Prairie UCC,*

*We want to thank you for joining us for worship on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. You brought a new spirit to our worship service. The music you shared was beyond what we could have expected. Your very generous giving is much appreciated. We would like to offer to you a portion of the financial giving you shared with us.*

*We continue to lift you up in prayer as you travel the new road you are called to follow. Thank you for taking those courageous steps to form a new congregation; a congregation willing to be a new voice of the voices in our area. We look forward to the day when we once again can worship together.*

*Yours in Christ,*

*Rev. Doug Zimmerman and the congregation of 1<sup>st</sup> UCC in Sheffield, Illinois*

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – December 2003 News

### FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

---

The Fellowship Committee is looking for volunteers for "coffee and treats" from December 21, 2003 through March of 2004. Please check your calendar to see which Sunday(s) you could help out. There will be a sign up sheet at church the next several Sundays. Thank you in advance!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Becky Perkins

### CHURCH INFORMATION

---

Temporary Church Office:  
22937 1140 N Ave  
Princeton IL 61356  
(815) 659-3432  
[hornbakr@theramp.net](mailto:hornbakr@theramp.net)

Marcie Jagers, Secretary

Rev. Gene Krause, Interim Minister  
205 Park Ave W  
Princeton, IL 61356  
(440) 339-9811 or call Marcie and leave a message for Gene  
[dgk@mac.com](mailto:dgk@mac.com)

### FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR

---

Advent ... always a special time:

- A time of anticipation and excitement as Christmas draws closer
- A time of preparation for gift giving and family visits
- A time of spiritual renewal as we "make room" for Jesus
- A time of remembering the ancient Christmas story

But this year ... for Open Prairie ... this is a particularly special Advent!

- This year, a new church is being born!
- Jesus is once again taking on flesh and living among us.
- We are becoming a small part of the Body of Christ.

We at Open Prairie are embarking on our own Pilgrimage to Bethlehem during this season. For us, this season is an opportunity to rediscover all of the ancient advent themes as we travel these highways and get ready for Christ's presence in our midst. We will journey through times of darkness and despair to the light of the world; we pass through the confusion and uncertainty of wilderness to the promise of new life.

Our Pilgrimage to Bethlehem will have stops along the way. We will pause in our travels to ponder anew the mysteries of Jesus' birth.

- Nov 30 — **"HOPE"** with leadership of our **elders** – our wisdom bearers.
- Dec 7 — **Single ones** among us will help us explore **"PEACE"** and we vote to call a minister.
- Dec 14 — **"JOY"** will abound with the enthusiasm of **youth**.
- Dec 21 — **Families** will draw our attention to **"LOVE"**.
- Dec 24 — **"There is room in THIS inn!"** – Christmas Eve with nine lessons and carols.
- Dec 28 — **"Open Prairie Christmas Carol"** – our pilgrimage past, present and future in the spirit of Dickens.
- Jan 4 — **"Light-Hearted, Magical, Bethlehem"** – On Epiphany we reach our destination and become members of Open Prairie.

Come. Let us journey together to witness the birth of a new church – the rebirth of Christ in our lives. -Gene