

**CORRESPONDENCE**

---

*\*Dear Curran,  
Thank you for the wonderful gift of \$50 to That All May Freely Serve, for your guest preacher, Lisa Larges. We know what a great preacher she is and we heard how much you all loved “the word” spoken by Lisa. We celebrate her too and we were glad she could be with you.*

*We have just learned that the building you had hoped to purchase did not go through. You are such a resilient and dynamic congregation and we know there is a building which will be just what you want waiting for you.*

*The spirit of God is working powerfully among you. Judith, Lisa and I have experienced it first hand. We pray for God’s continued blessing, for you are such a blessing and touchstone for so many who long for your ministry.*

*Thank you for touching our lives with your goodness and love. Happy, Happy Thanksgiving. God is in the midst of your ministry and we continue to feel blessed by your prophetic witness, compassion and love.*

*Many many thanks,  
The Rev. Dr. Jane Adams Spahr*

*\*Open Prairie folks, (especially Hazel Crain)*

*Thank you so much for thinking of me on my birthday! Hope all is going well with the new church and I look forward to coming home over break so I can see everyone. Thanks again! Jocelyn*

*\*To everyone at Open Prairie UCC, Freedom House gratefully acknowledges your generous contribution on behalf of the victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Thanks so much for your very generous contribution and for your prayers! All are much appreciated.*

*God bless you all,  
Stephanie Cartwright*

*\*Dear Kathy,  
I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to you and the members of your youth group for a job well done. It is amazing to me how many flowers got planted in simply a days’ time. Tulips are my absolute favorite and I cannot wait for spring so we can enjoy the fruits of your groups’ labor. You should be very proud of yourself and the youth who pitched in to make the project such a success.*

*It is through the generosity of groups like yours that we are able to continue to keep Pilgrim Park up and running at such a high standard of quality for groups in the future to use. Thank you for helping to support the mission of Outdoor Ministries as a whole. I look forward to working with you and your group again in the future.*

*Wishing you and your group a very happy and safe holiday season.*

*Wendy Croisant  
Pilgrim Park Manager*

### **CHURCH COUNCIL**

The Church Council met November 30 for our monthly meeting. More will be reported by the respective Teams but things are going well as we wrap up our first year and look forward to 2005! It was reported that the new piano funds have been raised and just under \$800 is needed to pay for the balance of the new sound system. Thanks to all who were able to contribute!

Paul also reported that his rough projections indicate we should end the year with an increase in the balance of general funds of over \$6000.

The building fund has grown very substantially and will be discussed more as our plans evolve.

Pastor Curran reviewed with the Council the process of funding for our church's denomination and its missions, etc. We contribute as Open Prairie on several levels: Our individual pledges, which we strive to have exceed 5% of overall revenue; our Five for Five contributions (specific needs as explained on Sunday's through the year); and sometimes on a special needs basis. The Open Prairie Congregation has a stated goal of using at least 10% of our annual income for mission work of all types, including OCWM. This is an aggressive goal for a brand new church but a matter of "living" our faith for Open Prairie folk.

One of the important needs of families with younger children is Sunday School activities during the worship service. The Christian Education Team has a program in place for every Sunday, given children in attendance, and barring unforeseen

circumstances. Bring on those young families! (and the young-at-heart, too!)

Along with the normal exchange of information between Council members, it was again affirmed how important communication is for our church. If you have questions please ask. If we don't know, we'll find out and get back to you.

Alan K. Forristall, Moderator

### **MESSIAH CONCERT**

I'm currently singing with the Handel Oratorio Society at Augustana College and we're preparing for this year's performances of Handel's Messiah. Performances will be held on Friday, December 10 and Saturday, December 11 at 7:30 pm and Sunday, December 12 at 2:00 pm. Tickets cost either ten or twelve dollars and people should contact me at 309-794-8130 or 815-488-2803 for purchasing details. They can also contact me through e-mail at [nicole-kromphardt@augustana.edu](mailto:nicole-kromphardt@augustana.edu) with any other questions. Augustana College is in Rock Island, IL, which is about an hour's drive west of Princeton along Interstate 80.

Thanks,  
Nikki Kromphardt

### **USHER/GREETER SCHEDULE**

12/5 Lark Fisher & Frank Bouxsein  
12/12 Lynette & Bob Ivey  
12/19 Cherie Miller & Ginny Martin  
12/26 Lou & Terri Zearing

### **PASTOR'S MESSAGE**

---

Greeting in the name of the Holy One,

I am moved beyond reason by the turning of the season made so visible in the last week. With the first fall of snow, the last of the pudgy squirrels that have called our backyard home through the Fall have taken to their nests high in the wintry treetops. As a Californian the snow is still somewhat novel to me and at the first sight of it Katie and I run outside and shed a tear or two...strange it must seem to most of you I know, but sweet nonetheless.

On early morning walks of late I find myself marveling at the diversity of the fragile and delicate snowflakes as they cascade out of the sky and this morning I could not help think that they are as good a metaphor as any I know for God's love. They come out of the sky in all different directions, catching us from the front, the back, above and below. Like God's grace the snowflakes this time of year are gentle (for the most part) and soft as they light upon a friendly nose. It is of comfort to me to be reminded that God's love is unpredictable, surprising and as mysterious as the gracefully falling snow.

I know those kinds of musings don't solve world hunger, or take a dent out of the national deficit, but I believe there is value in taking moments to appreciate the simple beauty that is so tangible this time of year. I have noticed my cats come inside for longer naps these days and as it begins to get dark out earlier, I am inclined to want to snuggle in to peacefulness myself.

Despite the hurriedness that so often accompanies the Christmas season there

is a natural rhythm to life that beckons us to slow down.

It has been a busy year for Open Prairie, we have accomplished much and there is still much more in store for our community. In order to embrace the months that lie ahead, both the joys and the challenges...the search for a new building, new commitments for the coming new year etcetera... we will all need to take a collective deep breath. To everything there is a season and this is a season for rest and renewal. So take a break when you can, remember God created enough time and each of us deserves opportunities to relish in the simpler joys of life. Go ahead...live the hallmark moments! Draw near to family and friends, attend a concert, stay home and watch a movie or two, take long walks in the snow, cherish one another and for goodness sakes take care of your selves. You are precious and beloved.

God Bless each of you,  
Rev. Curran Reichert

### **PRAIRIE CIRCLE**

---

Prairie Circle will gather on Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the Underground Inn. Please contact Hazel Crain at 875-3301 for more information or to make your reservation.

### MISSION TEAM

Greetings from the Mission Team,

November was a busy month with lots of exciting things going on. We launched our Giving Tree project on November 28th and it was great to see so many people eager to take part. Thanks to the artistic talents of Margaret Autrey, the tree looked very jolly with snowflakes and ornaments each bearing the name and gift wish of a Gateway client. Gifts should be wrapped with the number or letter of your client printed in the corner of the package. Please drop your gifts off at the pastor's home by December 18th or you can bring them to worship on December 19th. There will be another opportunity to choose a Giving Tree ornament in worship on December 12th.

Thanks to everyone who bought an Open Prairie shirt or sweatshirt. What a great outreach and evangelism tool. We'll be everywhere! We'd like to extend a special thank you to Rev. Katie Morrison for her graphic design expertise and Margaret Autrey for her artwork without which this project wouldn't have been possible.

The Mission Team had the opportunity to tour Freedom House and what a powerful and wonderful experience it was. There are members of Open Prairie who have completed the training to be crisis counselors for Freedom House and we are exploring other ways in which we might be involved and supportive.

Our God is Still Speaking banner has arrived and we look forward to hanging it for all to see outside the Prouty Building. It will make a great visual connection with the

United Church of Christ's television campaign.

This month the Food Pantry would like us to collect paper products (paper towels, toilet paper, napkins, etc...) for the month of December. Please bring your contributions to worship or anytime during the week by placing them in the Open Prairie Food Pantry barrel located in the Prouty Building.

Well, we have a number of other irons in the fire, but I think that's probably all I should say lest everyone starts to turn out. More will be forthcoming about other projects we are pursuing next month. Our next meeting is December 7th at Kelly Autrey-Webber's house at 7:30 following Prairie Circle. Please come if you feel so inclined. We'd love to have you.

Peace, Kelly

### FELLOWSHIP TEAM

A trip to Circa '21 Dinner Theater in Rock Island has been planned for Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005 to see "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat". The more the merrier – and the cheaper!! Sign-up at church on Sunday morning or call Lynette Ivey at 872-1105 for more information.

Pizza Hut will donate 15% of lunch and dinner sales to Open Prairie for the first Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each month from November 2004-May 2005. Mark your calendar for December 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>!!! Proceeds will go to the Fellowship budget. Coupons are available at church on Sunday mornings.

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – December 2004 News

### Report to Members of the Prairie Association, United Church of Christ For the year 2004

First of all, I'm grateful for the chance to report to you in this way. The work of the wider church is often invisible to most of you who are reading this report. Even though it is invisible, that does not mean it is unimportant. However, because this ministry is completely dependent on your generous and enthusiastic support, its relative invisibility can be a problem. It is only human to value less that which we seldom see or understand. Given that fact, I have been working much more deliberately in the last year to make the work of the Prairie Association more visible.

Secondly, this work I do with you and for you is a privilege. Although it is often not easy work, it is nonetheless very satisfying. I am grateful that you accept me in this role and provide the support and resources to continue this ministry.

The Prairie Association exists first and foremost to empower ministry in our 44 local congregations. To that end, the bulk of my work falls into several categories. The first two of these take up the largest part of my working time:

The support of the search and call process is a time-consuming work. It is also a very rewarding ministry. By this time (I have been the Prairie Association Minister almost 8 years!), I have worked with search committees in all but 7 of our churches. In several churches I've now helped with the search process more than once. One of my goals is to help churches call pastors who truly "fit" their congregation so that the length of pastoral tenures might be lengthened.

I spend a very substantial amount of time in the support, care and coaching of clergy. Almost 3/4 of the full-time pastors in the association participate regularly in one of our four SAG groups (an acronym for **S**upport, **A**ccountability and **G**rowth). Each of these groups meets twice a month. They provide a place for clergy to explore issues which are difficult and personally challenging. I believe this may be the most important work I do on your behalf; providing a caring, but challenging context for your pastor in which she/he may experience personal and professional growth.

I spend varying amounts of time representing the association and the wider church beyond the association at special events in the lives of our churches; events such as anniversary celebrations, installations and ordinations, and farewell services for departing pastors. Lately I have been intentionally visiting the churches of the association during an ordinary Sunday worship service. This gives me a chance to meet the congregations in "ordinary" time, to thank congregations for their generous support of OCWM, and to hear the pastors preach. This has proved a rewarding experience. I should finish the current round of visits during the middle of 2005, and may immediately begin a new round (resources permitting).

There are many, many other miscellaneous tasks which call for my attention. I don't have access to all the resources a church might need, but I do my best to be responsive.

Your generous support of OCWM makes this ministry possible. The largest part (about 60%) of your OCWM giving supports

the work of the Prairie Association. The remainder helps support the rest of the wider church; the rest of the Illinois Conference and the national ministries of the UCC.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you in these and other ways. God bless you as you continue to serve Christ in your respective communities.

Rich Pleva  
Prairie Association Minister  
[rwpleva@prairieucc.org](mailto:rwpleva@prairieucc.org)  
815-758-3497

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP\$ FOR UCC MEMBERS.** Scholarships are available for the 2005-06 academic year.

- Enrolled in an accredited college or university in the united States
- Under the age of 25 years
- Entering sophomore, junior, or senior year of study
- Maintaining at least a C average or equivalent

For applications and information please contact:

Minister for Grants, Scholarship & Resources  
Parish Life & Leadership Ministry Team  
Local Church Ministries  
United Church of Christ  
700 Prospect Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44115-1100  
E-mail: [scholars@ucc.org](mailto:scholars@ucc.org)

### **1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL RUMMAGE SALE AT PILGRIM PARK on MAY 6<sup>TH</sup> & 7<sup>TH</sup>**

All proceeds will be used to help fund the summer camping program at Pilgrim Park Camp, including purchasing program supplies and helping to scholarship campers.

Donations for the sale will be accepted at the camp November 15, 2004 through April 15, 2005. All donations of gently used items for the rummage sale will be accepted including, but not limited to household items, furniture, toys, games, kitchen supplies, clothing and other miscellaneous items. If you are unable to get the items to the camp, please contact the camp at 815-447-2390 and a staff member will arrange for a pick-up to be made.

### **CHURCH INFORMATION**

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

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

### **CONEFLOWER FARMS**

---

We hope you enjoyed your produce from Coneflower Farm. Even though our CSA season is ending, certain produce items will continue to be available into the winter, some longer than others. Notable among these are: potatoes, turnips, beets, radishes, brussel sprouts, cabbage, bok choy, carrots, sweet potatoes, squash, pumpkins, gourds, garlic, popcorn, honey, eggs, goat milk. Give us a call to make an order and arrangements for picking it up. Our number is 646-4809.

We would very much appreciate your returning any of the empty produce boxes. WE plan to contact you late in the winter to determine your interest in participating in our CSA next year. We are looking for a few individuals who would like to share with us in donating potatoes to a local food pantry. Contact us for details.

Thank you very much for your business this year. We hope you will enjoy the change of pace that winter brings as much as we do!

Sincerely, Dennis & Ellen Zehr

### **CHRISTIAN ED**

---

#### ▪ **Confirmation News**

Confirmation was held at Pilgrim Park on Sunday, November 21<sup>st</sup>. Seven young people were confirmed: Payden Aronson, Abby Beneke, Olivia Bettasso, Evan Hale, Amy Stalter, John Zearing and Sallee Zearing. Kathy read a poem to the confirmands and gave each one a necklace with a fish symbol as a gift from their church family. Each confirmand read a piece of Scripture or poem that was meaningful to them. Payden said, "Honor

thy Father and Mother". Parents, mentors, and supporters were then called forward. Each one read something that was a reflection of their love or hopes or expectations for their children. Their words were very moving.

Pastor Curran & the congregation confirmed each child with a special blessing and welcomed them to our church family.

#### ▪ **Youth Group**

On Sunday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, the senior high youth group planted over 700 flower bulbs at Pilgrim Park. Tulips are Wendy's favorite and we planted 12 clumps around her office.

The youth group will serve a Café Italiano this Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup> after the 4:00 p.m. worship at Pilgrim Park.

Cooking and candy making will take place on Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. in Hornbakers' kitchen.

On December 12<sup>th</sup> the youth will host a bake sale during the Advent event at the Prouty Building from 4-5:30 p.m.

#### ▪ **Adult Education**

***Deepening Spirituality.*** Continuing on Wednesdays in Advent.....December 8, 15 and 22 from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Pastor's Place.

## OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – December 2004 News

### BIRTHDAYS for DECEMBER

12/05	Stephen Stumpf
12/11	Al Forristall
12/15	Sallee Beneke
12/18	Frank Bettasso Beth Forristall
12/20	Adam Webber
12/21	Courtney Sapp
12/23	Daniel Kuhnert
12/27	Janis Land

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

### MEN'S GROUP

"GET GOD IN THE GAME: A POKER GROUP FOR GUYS!", an adult men's fellowship, meets on the first Wednesday of the month from 7-9 p.m. All levels of skill are welcome. For more information and next month's location, please talk to Terry Williams at 872-5308 or at church.

### DECEMBER DATES

***Deepening Spirituality.*** Wednesdays in Advent December 1, 8, 15 and 22 from 6-7:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 5<sup>th</sup> worship will be held at Pilgrim Park at 4:00 p.m. The Sr. High Youth Group will serve a meal following worship. A Healing Service will take place after the meal.

DECEMBER 7<sup>th</sup> is the date for Prairie Circle's meeting in December. This is a change in date so please make a note on your calendar!

DECEMBER 12<sup>th</sup> an Advent Event for all ages will take place from 4-5:30 p.m. at the Prouty Building. Events planned include a

youth group bake sale, crafts for all ages, Christmas music, hot cider, and warm fellowship. Bring your friends and neighbors and get in the Christmas Spirit!

DECEMBER 19<sup>th</sup> we will have a Christmas Caroling event beginning at 6:00 p.m.

DECEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>, our Christmas Eve Service will be held at 8:00 p.m. at Pilgrim Park.

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### Sunday Mornings

10:30 am Worship at Prouty Building  
(12/05 is at Pilgrim Park)

12/01	8:00 am	Prayer Group
	6:00 pm	Spirituality Group
	7:00 pm	Men's Group
12/02	6:30 pm	Choir Practice
12/05	4:00 pm	Worship at Pilgrim Park
	5:00 pm	Italian Meal
	5:45 pm	Healing Service
12/07	6:00 pm	Prairie Circle
12/08	8:00 am	Prayer Group
	6:00 pm	Spirituality Group
12/09	6:30 pm	Choir Practice
12/12	4:00 pm	Advent Event @ Prouty
12/15	8:00 am	Prayer Group
	6:00 pm	Spirituality Group
12/16	6:30 pm	Choir Practice
12/19	6:00 pm	Christmas Caroling
12/21	7:00 pm	Christian Ed
12/22	8:00 am	Prayer Group
	6:00 pm	Spirituality Group
12/24	8:00 pm	Christmas Eve Service at Pilgrim Park
12/25		Merry Christmas!
12/28	7:00 pm	Council Meeting

