

---

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

---

### *“What a Friend”*

You know that old saying, “with friends like that, who needs enemies” or “some friends are better than no friends, but there are some friends you’d be better off without.” This past Sunday we sang the old hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” But sometimes a little Yiddish spin on the phrase gives it a more accurate ring, “*What, a Friend we have in Jesus...you call that a friend?*”

In last week’s sermon I asked the congregation to put themselves in the position of those who get left behind in the Mathew **4:12-23**. First we determined which disciples Jesus called into service in this passage; they are Peter, his brother Andrew, James Son of Zebedee, and his brother John. You will have to go find a Bible for this next question... go ahead I will wait... OK, who does scripture say James and John leave behind? Their father Zebedee, right, and if there is one parent who is left behind, it is probably safe to assume that there are others parents being left behind, maybe even spouses and children, sisters and brothers.

When Jesus breezes through inviting these men to join his disciple conga line, he does not appear to give much thought to those who are left in the boats and on the shore with their jaws dropped open and a fair amount of skepticism about the boy’s *new friend Jesus*. It also bears noting that the would be followers of Jesus were not given a whole lot of options, like “Hey guys- think this over for a few days, talk to your families make sure it is a good time for the movement of the Holy Spirit to **totally disrupt your entire lives!**” This is one of those *Holy Spirit blows where it will* moments, and one is either on board with it or one is left behind on the shore wondering what the heck just happened. Could this be another one of those scriptures about loosening our grip on control? I think it is.

This is a time of huge transition both for Open Prairie and for me personally. Last week I asked the congregation how it was coping with the transition and I encourage those who were not there to engage in the conversation as well. For my part, I have been trying to maintain a sense of normalcy.

But as the **Sold** sign goes up on our house, and folks begin to notice that my office is in boxes, it makes more sense to acknowledge that it’s not business as usual at OPUCC. It’s fair to recognize that we are in the midst of the great unknown, wondering how is it all going to work out, will the church be as strong as it has been, will we lose people, will you be happy with your new pastor. Questions for which none of us has the answer.

But this is also the moment to remind everyone of a very important point, which is that despite how ill prepared or fearful any of us might feel about picking up our nets and following Jesus, the same Spirit that abided with Open Prairie at the very beginning, abides with us today. I used to repeat one phrase over and over again every time things got hard “whom God calls, God also equips.” Beloved, we have indeed come this far by faith and I am certain that God did not bring us this far to leave us. Whatever happens next, whatever the future may bring... all of our experiences together have prepared us to walk into what *will be* with the confidence that God is with us now and forever.

I pray deep peace for us all,

*Rev. Curran Reichert*

~~~~~If you are interested in a *one on one* session with Rev. Reichert prior to her departure please sign-up on the calendar sheets in the church office.



**Have you borrowed any books from the Open Prairie Library? If so, please return them when you are finished so others may check them out!**

---

## mission news

---

Greetings from the Mission Team,

Valentine's Day is just around the corner! What better gift could you give your loved one than...CAFFEINE! Susan has fairly traded coffee, tea, cocoa, and delicious chocolate to excite the palate of your nearest and dearest.

Our next movie night will be Sunday, Feb. 10th. We will gather together at 6 that evening for a yummy dinner of soup, bread, and dessert before watching the film, "The Real Dirt on Farmer John" which is the story of Illinois organic farmer John Peterson and his odd journey. The film has been getting great reviews on its tour around the world. Come join us for some fun.

Please keep the Food Pantry in mind these cold winter days. They have requested we contribute [Soup and Crackers](#) for the month of February.

Thank you for all your support and help.  
Peace,  
Kelly

### FOOD PANTRY FOR FEBRUARY:

#### Soup & Crackers



---

## February

---

## CALENDAR OF

### EVENTS

---

|         |         |                         |
|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Feb. 6  | 8:00 am | Prayer group @ Autrey's |
| Feb. 6  | 7:00 pm | Ash Wednesday Service   |
| Feb. 7  | 6:30 pm | Choir @ Webber's        |
| Feb. 10 | 6:30 pm | Mission Movie           |
| Feb. 13 | 8:00 am | Prayer group @ Autrey's |
| Feb. 14 | 6:30 pm | Choir @ Webber's        |
| Feb. 14 |         | Happy Valentine's Day!  |
| Feb. 17 | 6:00 pm | Youth Group meeting     |
| Feb. 20 | 8:00 am | Prayer group @ Autrey's |
| Feb. 21 | 6:30 pm | Choir @ Webber's        |
| Feb. 23 | 7:30 pm | Coffee House            |
| Feb. 26 | 7:00 pm | Church Council Mtg.     |
| Feb. 27 | 8:00 am | Prayer group @ Autrey's |
| Feb. 28 | 6:30 pm | Choir @ Webber's        |

---

### Christian Education

---

**Senior High Youth Group:** The Senior High group will meet for an activity on Sunday, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Christian Education** is still looking for folks who would be interested in helping out with Sunday School. Even if you don't want to teach but are available to be a second adult in the Sunday School room your help is greatly needed. Please let Wendy know if you are interested in helping or subbing.

**Just a reminder.** We are continuing to recycle ink jet cartridges. All proceeds are used to help fund the younger youth going to camp.

Peace, Wendy

---

### ☺ HAPPY FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY ☺

---

|         |                  |
|---------|------------------|
| Feb. 2  | Curran Reichert  |
| Feb. 5  | Becky Sapp       |
| Feb. 12 | June Harmon      |
| Feb. 12 | Maggie Beneke    |
| Feb. 14 | Karyn Stark      |
| Feb. 20 | Debby Jarvis     |
| Feb. 21 | Prudence Yagmin  |
| Feb. 21 | Barbara Madsen   |
| Feb. 23 | Susan Hale       |
| Feb. 23 | Susan Feigenbaum |
| Feb. 23 | Michael Zearing  |
| Feb. 24 | Douglas Land     |
| Feb. 29 | Carol Kuhnert    |

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

## Prairie Circle News

*Prairie Circle will not meet in February.*

## Church Council News

The next church council meeting will be Tues. Feb 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m.

## Stewardship & Finance

Happy Leap Year!

An extra day given to us in 2008. How are we going to enjoy this blessing? Perhaps by understanding that each day God gives us is a blessing and remembering the importance of being faithful stewards.

As I explained in last month's newsletter, there are four Special Offerings throughout the year. In 2007 we contributed \$1,673.00 to Special offerings as follows:

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| One Great Hour of Sharing | \$615.00 |
| Strengthen the Church     | \$391.00 |
| Neighbors in Need         | \$352.00 |
| The Christmas Fund        | \$315.00 |

In 2007 we pledged \$7,039.00 to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Basic Support. Actual contributions were \$4,167.44. In 2008, we plan to make more frequent updates of your contributions to help in your recordkeeping.

Our support of OCWM confirms that stewardship is a vital ministry of Open Prairie.

See you in church,  
*Patricia Wilson*

## From the Church Moderator

In early January the Church Council met with Kathy Lawes, Prairie Association Minister. She informed us regarding the procedure for seeking an interim Pastor. She will circulate our needs on various websites. She hopes to provide to us information on potential candidates in the near future. We would like to have the interim Pastor in place by April. We will keep you informed of our progress. After the interim Pastor is in place we will form a search committee for the permanent Pastor. This committee will represent the Open Prairie congregation.

Your Moderator,  
Bill Ollila

## THANK YOU!

Thank you, Open Prairie, for your understanding and support while I had to be out of the office helping my daughter. I am truly blessed to work in such a special place!  
*Ami Chamberlain*

Happy  
Valentine's  
Day

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  
Office Open Tue./Thu. 9:00 – 5:00 pm

Rev. Curran Reichert  
308 Park Ave W  
Princeton, IL 61356  
(815) 872-1661 home office  
revreichert@openprairie.org

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