

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – February/March 2006 News

A NOTE FROM MARCIE

I want to thank you all for the very memorable time in my honor during worship on January 22nd. I am grateful to know you all and to have been a part of this journey. Thank you for the beautiful necklace and gift of cash. I will miss working with you. -Marcie

YOGA CLASS

Yoga classes continue to be practiced at OPUCC on Wednesday evenings at 6 pm. This is a relaxing, modified Ashtanga class led by Karyn Vaughn. The class focuses on breathing techniques and gentle stretches which relieve stress and help to gain flexibility. Cost is \$20/month with all proceeds going to OPUCC. If interested, call Karyn at (815) 866-4787 or (815) 646-4511. We will have a mat for you to use!

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The closet in the church office reception area has mailboxes for each team, the pastor, the treasurer, the moderator and the choir. If you need to communicate anything with these folks, feel free to drop off your information in their mailbox. Those folks who represent teams are asked to remember to check your mailbox frequently!

PIZZA! PIZZA!

Pizza Hut day for Open Prairie is the first Wednesday on the month. Be sure to pick up a form at church to take with you! This is an easy way to earn some cash for the church!

OH NUTS!

One pound bags of tasty pecan halves are available for sale! You can pick up a bag or two anytime at the church office or Sunday mornings. Cost \$8.00.

VIOLIN LESSONS AT OPEN PRAIRIE

It is never too early or late to learn.

The 10 year anniversary of teaching violin in Princeton has marked my studio moving to Open Prairie. I am excited by the opportunity to extend violin lessons to more people in this community. Violin lessons are held Mondays. Lesson times are scheduled individually with openings spread throughout the day.

Since moving to Illinois in 1992, I have been blessed to learn of the desire of many to learn the violin. Lessons can begin as early as 4 years of age. At 4 this is a family activity. Parents / Grandparents / Guardians are requested to stay for the lesson. Group lessons, in conjunction with the lesson, are offered as they can be coordinated with people's schedules at no additional charge. I also have many students who begin later in their life or have physical challenges. It is never too late to learn.

If you would like further information please feel free to stop on Mondays or call me at 1-888-277-6090 home or my cell (309) 945-2637. -Constance Deal

GREETER SCHEDULE

03/05	
03/12	Mimi Cofoid & Wendy Croisant
03/19	Barb Rodda
03/26	Molly Hornbaker & Margo Bertram
04/02	
04/09	Ray Kuhnert
04/16	Suzie Stalter & Janis Land
04/23	Lori Pettee & Trishia Jones

**SUMMER STAFF OPENINGS AT
PILGRIM PARK**

Looking for a rewarding summer experience? Would you like to work with children and live in a rural wooded environment? We may have just the summer job for you!

The Co-Managers of Pilgrim Park Camp are currently interviewing to fill summer staff positions. They are looking for youth (16 years+) who are interested in a positive and fulfilling work experience. Are you a young person looking for a job who is mature and self-reliant; hard working and dependable, a person growing in your faith and who wants to have fun? If so please call Jim Jarvis at 815-447-2390 today!

SR. HIGH YOUTH GROUP NEWS

January 22. 10 youth and 2 chaperones went bowling at Crown Lanes. Lots of laughter and we listened to Happy Birthday on the juke box 6 times to celebrate Jason Behrends' birthday.

January 29. Adults and youth drove to Pilgrim Park for Mission Sunday. We painted a conference room and picked up sticks in the vast yard.

February 5th. Super Bowl Sunday. The youth gathered at 10 am in the Open Prairie kitchen. We made 160 sandwiches by noon. Church was held at 4 pm and the Youth Group supplied sandwiches, chips, lemonade, cookies & brownies for the meal before our service. We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who supported this fundraiser as we earned \$511!

Please mark Sunday, April 23rd on your calendar now for Open Prairie Youth's annual Festival of the Arts and Potato Bar!

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Friends,

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!! On a dark and gloomy Sunday morning over 25 of you arrived armed with smiles and laughter, willing spirits and the desire to work hard! One hour later, the dining hall was emptied of all the furniture, a large room had been painted, sticks piled for ready removal, trash gathered and some weeding done. In addition the children and young-at-heart adults had created seasonal decorations to adorn the walls of our dining hall. WOW!!

What a wonderful gift you brought to Pilgrim Park Camp. It would have taken our small staff many hours to accomplish the same tasks. Not only do we not have to do these chores, we are now free to set about doing some of the other work that begs our attention here at camp. But in addition to the gift of time and muscle, you brought a gift of spirit – the spirit of joy, of community and of love. Jim and I are deeply grateful for both the gift of work and the gift of spirit. It is people like you that make our work here at Pilgrim Park such a delight.

Shalom, Debby
Rev. Deborah S. Jarvis, Co-Manager

InterPlay comes to OPUCC

"Being in your body"? What could that possibly mean? "Isn't the body a temporal shell that we will cast aside like the carapace of a molting cicada? Won't we move on to something more noble, more ethereal like those toga-ed gods in the movies wafting around clouds pumped from an off-stage fog machine? Won't the true beauty of our souls finally be revealed at the end time so we can cast aside our concern for our wrinkly skin, lumpy thighs, hair that grows only where it shouldn't, and all the unseemly burps and urges of day-to-day life? Won't we finally be light and lithe? Don't you wish." These are the words of Phil Porter co-creator with Cynthia Winton-Henry of a movement called Interplay - check it out locally at InterPlayChicago@msn.com (630)-674-8891 or internationally at InterPlay worldwide www.InterPlay.org.

Here is some more vintage Phil, "A few hundred years of accumulated culture and language have convinced us that the true "us" is separate from our bodies; trapped in the envelope of our skin, our beautiful spirits bouncing from edge to edge, edgy to escape. But face it -- here we are, all arms and legs akimbo, full of snaky veins and fatty corpuscles. We are firmly rooted on, in, and of the earth, try as we may to rise above it and ourselves.

Body, mind, heart, spirit--it is all one. Not kept in separate compartments like the knives, forks and spoons in the silverware drawer, but all jumbled together. Our experience is as specific and varied as the potato masher, the cheese slicer, the garlic press, and hundreds of other kitchen utensils that we can hardly identify by name or function. We are a delightful mystery, full of inexplicable surprises and the simplest of pleasures and pain.

But how did we get where we are today, all self-conscious and gangly and embarrassed of ourselves? We should be plumped up like an arrogant rooster, our fullness ruffling every feather; instead we slump in wobbly shame not

quite ready to claim the "all" of who we are, have been, will be.

The number one excuse for not being in one's body turns out to be self-consciousness. If we ask of ourselves anything more than the bare minimum we might do something silly, and then where would we be? Fortunately, it turns out that our self-consciousness is a tiny curb to step over, not a fortress wall. There may be a little bump there but step lively and you will be over it in a minute.

You have so little to lose and so much to gain.

Life is far too complicated and stressful to try to be living it somewhere other than in our bodies. We are bodies. To try to escape this essential fact is futile. Eventually we pay the price of denying our physicality--lethargy, illness, dull minds, dull spirits, lost opportunities for wonder or joy, for insight or information. To ignore the fullness of our physicality is to cut the threads in a many colored, multi-layered tapestry of knowing."

Sound interesting? Plan on joining in the first ever OPUCC Interplay experience...**Praying with Body & Soul** with Rev. Curran Reichert certified interplay leader and teacher.

Saturday, March 18 10:00 am- 12:00 pm
Open Prairie UCC, 25 E. Marion St. in Princeton, IL

All are welcome, all abilities, all bodies, no exceptions! Learn more about breathing, playing moving and praying. Class is free to OPUCC members and friends. For more information please contact Rev. Curran Reichert 815-872-5150 or revreichert@openprairie.org.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

An Argument for Christianity Rev. Curran Reichert

"I'm not religious, I'm spiritual. I don't need to understand the Bible because it's all metaphor anyway right? Besides, I don't believe in God." These are the statements heard with increasing frequency that motivated me to introduce "Living the Questions" a course that began in early January and will continue throughout Lent. (I should note that all are still welcome to attend the "LTQ" classes. While the material does build on itself, each session is self contained and comprehensible even without having attended all of the sessions.) The deeper we move into this course however, the more firmly convinced I am that the most direct way for progressive Christians to root themselves in an enduring, life giving faith is by becoming educated. Over time I have learned that apathy cancels out growth and does nothing to provide fertile soil in which sustainable progressive Christianity can flourish. Knowledge, questions and struggles with the relevant issues facing progressive Christianity and the Church today, are what provide the necessary ingredients for growth.

Believe it or not when we engage the "big" questions, when we sink our teeth into exploration of the Bible, other sacred texts, the history and development of Christianity, as well as other world religions, it becomes possible to regenerate a healthy relationship with Christianity. Like a lizard can grow a new tail, we can grow a new (an integrated) understanding of our religion, one that is in keeping (not in conflict) with our convictions. If, however, what we are willing to accept for religion is a shallow mish mosh of certitudes and

platitudes within which we recognize little or no truth, then religion has indeed lost its value. The "Living the Questions" course has renewed my conviction that the Christian faith is worth learning about, it is worth fighting for, it is worth living for, and Jesus teaches us that it is even worth dying for.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, the celebrated pastor of New York's Riverside Church, had grown accustomed to hearing "I don't believe in God!" His response was simple, "Tell, me about the God you don't believe in; chances are good I don't believe in that God either." While it may be fashionable to define the kind of Christian's we are not, now more than ever it is imperative for OPUCC as a congregation to put energy into defining the kind of Christians we are. Knowing we belong at OPUCC is one thing, articulating the reasons why and to whom we belong is what will grow this church, enabling us to reach out to others with clarity and confidence. Living the Questions is providing people with the opportunity to learn a healthy respect and value for the stories of our ancestors; together we are learning to put words to what and why we believe.

This is our work now. Now that we have a solid community and a space to call our own, asking hard questions and learning to articulate our faith is the work of this church. We must be about the work of claiming our rightful place in the kingdom of God. We must work our way toward being able to proudly proclaim, this is our religion, our church, and our faith, our Bible, our God- to seek, to know, and to love.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

FEBRUARY

- 2 Curran Reichert
4 Gene Humke
5 Becky Sapp
12 June Harmon
Maggie Beneke
14 Karyn Vaughn
21 Prudence Yagmin
23 Susan Feigenbaum
Susan Hale
Michael Zearing
24 Douglas Land
29 Carol Kuhnert

MARCH

- 3 Kelly Autrey-Webber
4 Bob Ivey
Angie Hughes
10 Don Schiff
13 Kathy Hornbaker
16 Nick Forristall
21 Jim Sears
Constance Deal
22 Hazel Crain
23 Mark Friedrich
25 Abby Beneke
26 Patricia Wilson
28 Sharron Klingel

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

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle meets the first Wednesday night of every month to share a meal. This is open to all the women of Open Prairie and their pals. For more information call Donna Chelin at 875-2060.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PRAYER

A contemplative prayer group gathers every Wednesday morning at the home of Hal & Margaret Autrey from 8:00-8:45 a.m. We open our prayer time with the reading of a prayer, poem or Scripture. We then begin 25 minutes of contemplative prayer & meditation with the sound of a singing bowl. We conclude with a time for joys and concerns. We extend an invitation to anyone interested to talk to Margaret Autrey or Kathy Hornbaker, or stop by on a Wednesday morning to join us!

LIVING THE QUESTIONS

The Living the Questions series continues to meet. See the following schedule. It is never too late to join in! For more info on this series, please visit www.livingthequestions.com

A Kingdom Without Walls: Ruth & Jonah

Sunday, February 26th, 12:30-2:00 p.m. or
Wednesday, March 8th, 7-9 p.m.

Lives of Jesus

Sunday, March 12th, 12:30-2:00 p.m. or
Wednesday, March 15th, 7-9 p.m.

Compassion: the Heart of Jesus' Ministry

Wednesday, March 22nd, 7-9 p.m.

A Passion for Christ: Paul the Apostle

Sunday, March 26th, 12:30-2:00 p.m. or
Wednesday, March 29th, 7-9 p.m.

Out into the World: Challenges Facing Progressive Christianity

Sunday, April 2nd, 4:00-6:30 p.m. or
Wednesday, April 5th, 7-9 p.m.

MISSION TEAM

Greetings from the Mission Team,

Open Prairie celebrated its first Jubilee Sunday with a joy-filled morning of worshipful work at Pilgrim Park. We met at the church for yummy sustenance provided by the Fellowship Team. Curran led us in prayer and song which provided a nice foundation for our morning's efforts. Debbie and Jim Jarvis greeted us warmly (what a lovely smile Debbie has) and set us to work. A group headed downstairs to paint a meeting room in the lower conference center while the rest hauled tables and chairs out of the dining room in preparation for stripping the floor. There were crafts for the kids as well, before they joined us outside to clean up the branches and mess made by the winter's storms. Twenty-five adults and five children were working that morning. What joy is present when Open Prairie folk gather together to tackle a project! It is a rare and beautiful thing. Thanks to everybody who showed up to make our first Jubilee worship such a success. The next Jubilee worship will be in April. We'll let you know what excitement we have in store.

Everybody has been great about supporting the Food Pantry. My mom, Margaret Autrey, has had to haul tons of stuff every week. It's good for her. Builds character. Keep it up, everyone, and help mom stay in condition. The Food Pantry has requested soup and crackers for the month of February and tuna and noodles for the month of March.

Peace to you all,
Kelly

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

Coffee Hour

The Fellowship Team is delighted to sponsor the Coffee Hour after church each week but we are in need of volunteers. You may help in the following ways: 1) Sign up to "do" the coffee hour one Sunday. This involves providing treats, making coffee and lemonade, set up and clean up. There is a sign up sheet at the back of the church. Please take the opportunity to be part this mission if you are able. 2) Provide treats (they need not be homemade!) which can be put in the freezer and used as necessary. Please contact Becky Perkins for more information.

Calling and Caring

The Fellowship Team is looking for folks who are willing to visit members of our church family who are in need of a visit. We are also in need of people who will provide a meal (you need not be a cook...carry out will work in many cases!) for families or individuals as needed. Please prayerfully considers this outreach opportunity. There is a sign up sheet at the back of the church. Please contact Becky Perkins for more information.

Pizza Hut

Mark your calendars for the first Wednesday of the month...Open Prairie night at Pizza Hut! Join us for food and fellowship. A good time is had by all! Pizza Hut forms are available at the church.

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CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:
25 E. Marion St
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 872-5150 mail@openprairie.org
(815) 872-5160 fax

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

Administrative Assistant: Peggy Walley

Church Web Site: www.openprairie.org

2006 Summer Mission Trip

The Sr. High Youth will be traveling to the Appalachian South Folklife Center in Pipestem, West Virginia for this year's mission trip. The center staff will organize a work project for our group. We will work 6 hours a day, Monday through Friday. We are very excited about this opportunity! Watch for more details in upcoming newsletters and the center is online at www.folklifecenter.org.

WORSHIP TEAM

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 1st. We will gather for a service at 7:00 p.m. at church.

For Maundy Thursday, we will be sharing a joint service with our friends from 1st UCC in Sheffield on February 13th. Open Prairie will be hosting a Seder supper before the Maundy Thursday service.

We will be dressing the worship space for Lent with a cut paper rainbow hanging and anyone interested in helping with that project should contact Linda Ernst or Ron McCutchan.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

02/21	7:00	pm	Open Prairie Support Group
02/22	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
	7:00	pm	"Living the Questions"
02/23	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers
02/26	10:30	am	Worship/New Member
	12:30	pm	"Living the Questions"
	6:00	pm	Sr. High Round Table
02/28	7:00	pm	Church Council
03/01			Pizza Hut Day!
	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
	5:30	pm	Prairie Circle at Pizza Hut
	7:00	pm	Ash Wednesday Service
03/02	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers
03/05	4:00	Pm	1 st Sunday Worship followed by educational opportunity for all ages
03/08	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
	7:00	pm	"Living the Questions"
03/09	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers
03/12	10:30	Am	Worship Service
	12:30	pm	"Living the Questions"
03/14	7:00	pm	Team Meeting
03/15	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
	7:00	pm	"Living the Questions"
03/16	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers
03/18	10:00	am	Interplay "Praying with Body & Soul" at church
03/19	10:30	am	Worship Service
			Semi-Annual Meeting
03/22	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
	7:00	pm	"Living the Questions"
03/23	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webber
03/26	10:30	am	Worship Service
	12:30	pm	"Living the Questions"
03/28	7:00	pm	Church Council
03/29	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
	7:00	pm	"Living the Questions"
03/30	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers



Open Prairie UCC
22937 1140 N Ave
Princeton, IL 61356

SAFE CHURCH NEWS

Our Church Council approved Open Prairie's first Safe Church Policy and Procedures manual. This manual is available to read in our church office. It is designed to provide a safe, nurturing space for all people, but especially our children and young adults. It also has a Key Policy. Our pastor, our youth group leader, our Moderator, and building maintenance leader all have keys to the church. If someone would like to request a key, there is a form that needs to be completed. The application then needs to be approved by a designated committee. The keys are monitored by the Safe Church Advocate to make sure all keys are returned on time. All requests and keys will be kept in a locked file cabinet by our Administrative Assistant.

Your safety chief,
Susan Hale

WELCOME PEGGY

We are excited to welcome Peggy Walley as our new Administrative Assistant. Peggy brings the warmth and integrity to the position that is consistent with the precedence set by our beloved Marcie. As we get to know Peggy and she gets to know us, I invite you to stop into the office and introduce yourself to her. Peggy's hours will be Wednesdays 9-5, Thursdays 11-5 and Friday 9-12. As Peggy is not available on Tuesdays, we will be looking for Volunteers to fill a two hour time slot each Tuesday between the hours of 11-3. Volunteers will simply need to be willing to answer phones and greet folks as they pass through the building. Please consider signing up for a time slot.

Thanks and Welcome Peggy!

Rev. Curran Reichert