

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – June 2005 News

WORSHIP NOTES

On **Sunday, June 12th**, we will attend the worship service as the culmination of the Illinois Conference UCC annual meeting in Peoria at the Ramada Convention Center. We will plan to arrive by 9:30 am with the worship service beginning at 10:00 am. New church starts in Illinois, in particular OPUCC, will be honored at this service. Our choir will be singing. Rev. Reichert has planned this worship service with Rev. Dr. Ozzie Smith of Covenant UCC in South Holland and Rev. Marilyn Pagan of Good News Community Church. There will be no worship service at the Prouty Building on Sunday, June 12th.

On **Sunday, June 26th**, Bishop John Selders will be our guest preacher at worship. Bishop Selders is the founding pastor of Amistad UCC in Connecticut. He is a Grammy award winning musician and an amazing preacher. Mark your calendars now...you don't want to miss this!

Worship Time Changes. For the months of July and August our worship time will change to 9:30 am

JULY.....we will "commission" our mission trip members at our July 3rd worship service. The mission trip group will lead our worship service on Sunday, July 17th. Come hear the stories of their trip and show your support for their outreach.

SABBATH MONTH

Spiritual health is a high priority for Open Prairie. In recognizing that Sabbath Time is an intrinsic part of spiritual well-being, during the month of July OPUCC will be taking a break from publishing the newsletter and holding Group Team and Council meetings. We want to honor those

who give so much to OPUCC throughout the year and offer everyone a chance to rest and renew so that we can come back rejuvenated in August.

Blessings, Rev. Reichert

CORRESPONDENCE

◆ *Dear Members of Open Prairie,*
I am doing fine. I am in week three of basic training. It has been so tough not seeing all your smiling faces but not to worry, I will be home soon and then I will feel whole again because right now I don't feel whole because I don't have all of you to see when I am down and out. I know one thing and that is you are all with me in spirit and I can feel all your praying and I want to say thank you for all your support. See you soon.

-David Wooster

Note: Carol Kuhnert shared David's address for anyone wanting to send cards or packages. Any correspondence would certainly mean a lot to him! David will graduate from basic training on July 1st and transfer to Texas.

Private David Wooster
4th Platoon ROUGH RIDERS
Alpha Battery, First Battalion 79th Sealed
Artillery
5001 NE Rothwell St, Unit A
Fort Sills, OK 73503-8018

MISSION TEAM

The food pantry would like us to contribute **macaroni & cheese** for the month of June and **peanut butter/jelly** for the month of July. Please keep those donations coming.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Please make a note on your calendar for the upcoming small group gatherings:

August 10, 17, 24 the focus is on "Gentleness," we will explore this important scriptural concept and how understanding it might better connect us to God and to one another.

October 12, 19, 26 topic TBA but go ahead and mark the dates in your calendars.

Making time to engage in intentional exploration of spiritual matters is one very important way Open Prairie will continue to grow a healthy and happy community from the inside out. I strongly encourage you to make time to participate in one or all of these small group opportunities.

May God continue to bless each of us with insight and the capacity to grow,
Rev. Curran Reichert

PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Here are some notes for Curran's summer schedule:

June 23-25 Council on Racism
June 27-29 National Coalition Meeting
June 30 New Church Start Gathering
July 1-7 General Synod
July 6-10 Worship leader for CLOUT in Northern California
July 11-16 Vacation

CONEFLOWER FARMS

Pickup of the weekly produce box will always be on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. at Curran & Katie's back porch – even if they are out of town.

STILL SPEAKING UPDATE

RIGHT NOW.....

2,301 churches are demonstrating their excitement about helping people find a spiritual home with the United Church of Christ. They are strengthening their United Church of Christ brand identity by joining the Stillspeaking movement. And they are extending extravagant hospitality in Jesus' name.

53% of all United Church of Christ members belong to a Stillspeaking church. What a powerful voice for invitation and welcome!

42,844 visitors went to "Find a Church" in March.

Amazing things can – and do – happen: *During our new members' orientation last Sunday, a woman told us about growing up [in another denomination]. In her 20s, she left the church because, "I just couldn't reconcile what I believed with what the church told me I had to believe. I was always getting in trouble for asking questions." When she saw the ad on TV . . . she immediately searched for a UCC church in town. "And here I am. I just wish I had known about the UCC ten years ago."*

At the end of the session, I ask the new members to say what excites them about becoming a member. Her response? "I finally get to ask questions."
-1st Cong Church, Moorhead, MN

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

"And in those days it came to pass..." sound familiar? Well, in these days in Princeton Illinois, it has come to pass that important decisions are to be made with regard to our future church home. Greetings OPUCC Community, may the God who has afforded us so many wonderful opportunities together be present in the new and wonderful opportunity of building a home together.

The first and perhaps most weighty issue at hand is how best to finance our new church home and all the wonderful things we want to put in it. I have promised you I will always be truthful with you and I believe transparency to be one of the cornerstones to building a healthy congregation so here is the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but the truth; according to the numbers we are still in need of approximately \$111,000. So, I ask that you continue to pray, stretch your collective imagination and conceive of clever ways to raise money for the Building Fund. For example; Carol Mazzaro has decided to host an All Church Yard Sale on Homestead weekend in her driveway (if you are interested in contributing to it, call Carol), the Fellowship Team is making and selling homemade Butter Mint Candy (if you are interested in ordering some for all your loved ones, friends and colleagues contact Donna Chelin). And you (yes you!) might have the next brilliant idea that would be just the ticket to helping us achieve our financial goal.

The lesser concrete, but equally important issues are what to put in and on the building, where to put what, how to hang it, mic it, light it, etc. To that end, the Building and the Esthetics Committees are doing a marvelous job making compromises and decisions on our behalf. For example, we have come to peaceful decisions regarding the color of the roof and the style of the doors, we have agreed to make both bathrooms accessible

and gender neutral, as well as agreeing upon the placement of all the electrical wiring and outlet installation...Whew! These are only some of the important, and at times tedious, decisions that have needed attention. You should also be aware of the many compromises that have been made so far and there are certainly more to come. For example; Victor Borst, in an effort to help Open Prairie embody a commitment to environmental stewardship, had some wonderful ideas about solar energy and geothermal heating and cooling. After much discussion it was decided that although those investments are definitely in line with Christ's teachings on environmental sensitivity and stewardship of the planet, we are not yet in a financial position to install the most eco-friendly products on the market. Instead, we have met in the middle as a team and made choices that are both within our budget and sensitive to energy efficiency.

Now, to a different but equally significant issue, several people have mentioned thoughts or questions regarding the symbols to be used at OPUCC. To that end, I am hoping this column will afford an opening for this conversation to take on a congregational dimension. In other words, I am going to tell you what I think and I want you to tell me, or the Esthetics Committee, what you think.

For many and diverse reasons we all have feelings about the Iconography and Symbolology of our faith. The key is to arrive at an agreement about the symbols which best represent who we as Open Prairie are seeking to reach, and the vision we as Open Prairie are seeking to live out.

For some of us it just isn't a church unless it has stained glass windows, a cross, a dove, a flame or some other symbol, which we recognize and associate with "the church." For others, those very same symbols have

come to represent a church in which all are not welcome, a church that has betrayed the ideals once thought to be held dear, and/or worse-those symbols have come to represent a hypocrisy that we desperately wish to avoid perpetuating in our incarnation as a new church start. Wherever you fall in the discussion, I would invite you to give some conscious thought to the symbols that have represented church to you in the past. Do they still represent an accurate picture of a church for you? I invite you to ask yourself how those symbols might or might not be representational of the Open Prairie Community- again who we are and whom we seek to attract. If you could choose a symbol or two to represent this church, what would you choose and where would you want it to be placed? Lastly, if someone were to ask you why you chose that symbol, how would you answer?

The following are my personal thoughts. I hope they will be helpful in encouraging you to formulate your own thoughts on the matter. I am a big fan of the flame, as a representation of the Living Spirit. The flame represents to me the day of Pentecost when the church came into being. It also symbolizes the possibility of that which, with God's help, rises up from the ashes. As I see it, we are a Pentecost people. Many of us have walked away from God time and time again thinking that the fire that once was that relationship has smoldered into nothingness, only to find that with a new chapter the flame has come to life again. I am also a fan of the circle, as it represents the fluidity and connectedness of this community, as well as directs our awareness to the world around us. I am attracted to the symbol of water for Open Prairie, because a stream doesn't necessarily always know where it is going to go-it goes where nature leads it and blazes a path as it goes.

The question has been raised, "should there be a cross on the front or the top of the new building"? I am of two minds on the cross as a representative symbol for my faith. On one hand, it represents God's tireless and inexhaustible solidarity with those who stand to set right systems of injustice, for that reason I believe it belongs inside the worship space where it stands alongside the very people who have been called to do that work. However, I am inclined to lean away from a cross on the outside of the building or as the first symbol people encounter when entering the space, precisely because it is not interpreted by all people as a universal sign of welcome and it is in many instances still being used as a symbol to justify the exclusion of others.

In the Catholic Church the focus of the cross is understandable. It is understandable specifically with reference to the emphasis on the body of Christ crucified on the cross, because in the Catholic tradition Jesus' willingness to suffer and die for the atonement of people's sins is a central tenant of the faith. In the Reformed Protestant tradition the cross is most often seen without Christ's body, signifying the Resurrection as the predominant focus of the reformed tradition. While I understand that the cross is the symbol most people have come to associate with the church, I am also very aware that it is a symbol that came to us through dominant religious bodies who have dictated throughout time what would and what would not be representational of "the church."

As far as I am concerned, where two or three are gathered and the intention is to worship God, that is church. If it happens in the woods, in a kitchen in someone's home, or in a community building, with or without a cross, it is no less church than if it happens in the grandest cathedral in Rome.

This worshipping community should choose the symbols that best represent our intention to be a Multi-racial, Multi-cultural, Just Peace, Open and Affirming community that is accessible to all. That symbol may well turn out to be a cross. It may be something else.

As always, I respect each of your opinions and mine, in this case, holds no more weight than does yours. So again, I encourage you to exercise your voice on this matter by writing an e-mail, calling, or being in conversation with myself or members from the Esthetics Team who will, in the end, be responsible for making decisions regarding symbols in the new space.

With deep respect for the journey to which we have each been called,
Rev. Curran Reichert

CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:

Marcie Jagers, Secretary
22937 1140 N Ave
Princeton IL 61356
(815) 659-3432
mail@openprairie.org

Rev. Curran Reichert

308 Park Ave W
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 872-1661 church phone
(815) 872-1515 home phone
revreichert@openprairie.org

Church Web Site:

www.openprairie.org

PRAIRIE KITCHEN CANDIES

The Fellowship team has embarked on an ambitious project and we need YOUR help! This is our endeavor to earn the necessary funds for the installation of a kitchen in our new church. We plan to make and sell "Prairie Kitchen Candies". Everyone can be of help...youth, men and women. There is something for everyone to do....cutting candy, making boxes or packaging.

We will have six flavors: Butter Mint, Cinnamon, Clove, Orange, Wintergreen and Chocolate. Candies will be packaged in 1/2 pound boxes and sell for \$3.00 per box. We'll have brochures you can give to your friends, work associates, family, neighbors, card group....anyone!! YOU are our "sales force"!! (May the force be with US!!!)

Hoffman's Patterns of the Past has offered to sell them for us in their store. Amen!!! Until we have a sufficient inventory of candy we will work every Tuesday evening (except the 2nd Tuesday) from 7:00 pm until ?? at Donna Chelin's home at 636 East Central Avenue -- along with some Saturday mornings.

We hope to make this an on-going project. We need a kitchen! Think: 80 boxes is equal to 1 sink! We're relying on YOUR support by giving your time and salesman/womanship!

*Roses are red, violets are blue,
Prairie Kitchen Candies are sweet
and so are YOU!*

God Bless,
Your Fellowship Team

CHRISTIAN ED

By the time the next newsletter comes out, we will have completed our 2005 mission trip. We ask for your prayers of support as we travel west with our mission outreach.

Mission Trip 2005 July 7-16

Destination: Cherry Creek, South Dakota, located on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation. You can access their website at www.sioux.org

Purpose: We will do Vacation Bible School with 35-45 kids for four days. In addition, we will do whatever work “projects” there may be. This is unpredictable. Our presence there is a purpose in itself.

Lodging: Also unpredictable. The church has a shower, a kitchen, and a mobile home that may or may not be available. Whether they all work is the exciting part.

Cross-Cultural Opportunities: People drift in and out all day, telling stories, sharing meals, laughing, hanging out. There is a possibility of a sweat lodge prayer experience, but that, too, is unpredictable. Of course, the children and relating to them, is what it is about. Pow Wow possibility.

Tourist Opportunities: Custer State Park - buffalo, big horn sheep, mystic places, Bear Butte State Park – a spiritual experience. Spontaneous stops at “tacky tourist places”.

Itinerary: We leave July 7, staying at a UCC church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The next day we travel to the Black Hills. We camp at Custer State Park for two nights -- the mountains, the cliffs, the buffalo. We then travel to the Reservation where we stay July 11-14. Coming back we stay at the same UCC church in Sioux Falls the night of July 15 arriving home Saturday night, July 16.

Adult Advisors: At this point we have Kathy Hornbaker, Al Forristall, and Lou Zearing. We will have college-age support from Brian Taylor and David Hornbaker.

Youth Groupers: Jared Bartman, Tom Beneke, Lauren Flowers, Nick Forristall, Jared Jagers, Tara Jagers, Ashley Kasperski, Tony McCombs, Trishia Pettee, Tyler Taylor, Creal Zearing, Joe Zearing

Spiritual Life: Daily journaling, morning and evening prayer. Singing, sweat lodge experience, sunsets, and a radically different geography that awakens awe. It is all about the awe and wonder.

AN INVITATION

The date as been set for the dedication of our new church home!

Mark your calendars now for Sunday, September 18. There will be a worship service at 10:30 a.m. at 25 E. Marion Street. Plans are also underway for activities on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. Details will be announced soon!

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

JULY

2	Wendy Croisant
7	Payden Aronson
10	Mimi Cofoid
12	Barb Ollila
13	Tina Aronson
14	Tanya Williams Scott Bickerman
20	Paul Goble
23	Victor Borst Lori Pettee
24	Amy Stalter
26	Kim Bettasso

TRACEY UPDATE

Several years ago, many of us got to know the Cook family – Ken, Tracey, Stevi & Jackson – as members of Hampshire Colony Church. Tracey was the first coordinator of the *Making It* program. Through a job transfer with LCN, they moved to Indianapolis. In 2004, Tracey was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Their family and friends have coined the phrase “optimystical” as their approach to her illness. The church office receives periodic updates by e-mail keeping us informed of Tracey’s health. If you would be interested in receiving these updates, please let Marcie know at the church office.

Here are a couple excerpts from recent e-mails from Ann Mosby: *I think the biggest way we can help is to encourage people to send 'thinking-of -you' cards and to keep praying. Her church ordered some blue rubber wrist bands that say "optimystical".. Chris and I are going to order more. We could offer them up and I could send them to people for solidarity! Things of support like that seem most meaningful to Tracey and when an illness endures, it is easy to feel like some have forgotten.*

.....Optimystical bands have been ordered and will be shipped in two weeks. Our hope is that people will wear them and remember to pray and send positive thoughts. In addition, many have asked how they can help from afar. A fund was set up last year for the Cooks, by their church family, to be used at their discretion.

Please send any donations payable to
St. Peter's United Church of Christ
3106 East Carmel Dr.
Carmel, IN 46033
Attn: Optimystical Fund

If you want to send a card of encouragement, laughter or love::

*Ken & Tracey Cook
9512 Roseapple Dr.
Indianapolis, IN 45256*

Please show your love and support by dropping a card in the mail. We will have wristbands available at church soon.

BUILDING TEAM

Building Capital Campaign Follow-up:

"THANK YOU!" to all who have responded to Becky Sapp with your pledge form. For those who may have set it aside or needed more time to consider, a follow-up will be sent this week. If you are unable to contribute financially we totally understand, however, prompt return of the form will help the Building Committee plan effectively. We also welcome your well wishes and ideas for fundraisers!

To date, contributions and pledges total \$179,150 toward our goal of \$262,000. The building is coming along very well, too. Drive by and take a look!

Al Forristall
-Building Capital Campaign Committee

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

6/07	6:30	pm	Youth Group
6/09	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
6/12	10:00	am	Worship in Peoria
6/14	7:00	pm	Monthly Team Meeting
6/16	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
6/19	10:30	am	Worship at Prouty
6/21	7:00	pm	Candy Making at Donna's
6/23	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team
6/26	10:30	am	Worship at Prouty
6/28	7:00	pm	Church Council Meeting
	7:00	pm	Candy Making at Donna's
6/30	6:30	pm	Choir Rehearsal
	8:00	pm	Building Team

JULY

7-16 SABBATH MONTH
Youth Mission Trip
Worship – 9:30 am at Prouty on Sundays

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

JUNE

2	Tara Jagers
7	Mary Forristall
10	Sharron Klingel
14	Jim Hughes
15	Katie Forristall
	Gary Klingel
16	Stella Earnest
	Tori Bettasso
19	Marcie Jagers
24	Dee Dennick
26	Frank Bouxsein
27	Bea Borst
	Jared Bartman
29	Tom Beneke

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