

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear OPUCC Family, Greetings in the name of the risen Christ,

This week finds me digging out from underneath the piles, well groomed by Peggy, that accumulated in my absence. The good news is that in the month that I was away, OPUCC functioned like the well oiled love machine God created it to be! Thanks to Peggy for taking such good care of the office, to Ron, and Linda, for creating a beautiful post Resurrection Sunday Service, to Kelly for overseeing Jubilee Sunday and to Ron (again) for leading the first Sunday of the month—each one was, I am certain, a wonderfully worshipful experience.

While I was away in California and in North Carolina, I was filled with a sense of gratitude; gratitude to God for allowing me the opportunity to serve OPUCC and gratitude to you all for graciously offering me time for rest and renewal. It was a wonderful trip and I am glad to be back.

In late breaking news, I am pleased to report that I have just been notified of my acceptance into the Doctor of Ministry Program at Chicago Theological Seminary, to begin studies in the fall. What it all means as of yet is a little unclear—it will probably look like my commuting to Chicago one day a week for classes while maintaining my full time pastorate with OPUCC. I thought you might like to know more about my intended area of study. My hope in sharing about the program is that it might become clear how this course of study will not only enrich me personally, but will hopefully, also be beneficial to our church community.

The project that was accepted by CTS is an exploration of New Church Development, with specific attention to the developing spiritualities emerging from the New Church Start movement. In engaging the D.Min. process, I seek to reflect on and articulate the

experiences born of the past nearly three years of pastoring with you in an intentionally progressive and inclusive New Church Start in our ultra-conservative environs. Through this effort, it is my intention to create resource materials designed to inspire hope and offer support to others who are called to engage in similar New Church Development within the United Church of Christ.

OPUCC will serve as home base for this project; research will include the exploration of New Church Development in at least three of the five Associations of the Illinois Conference (Chicago Metropolitan, Prairie and Fox Valley Associations). The people around whom my research will center are the disenfranchised, the marginalized, the skeptical and those who seek to serve them. Specifically, my interest concerns members of marginalized communities and their allies, the unchurched, and those who have intentionally left church but find themselves returning to give it “one last chance.” Considering these persons as the core around whom New Church Development centers, the challenges facing new church sustainability are many. With your help, I will seek to articulate some of the issues we have faced as a congregation, so that others facing similar issues need not feel like they are reinventing the wheel.

Additionally, I will be studying healthy religious paradigms based in authenticity, wholeness and intentional inclusion. What we and other New Church Starts are discovering is that being a new church affords communities the freedom to move, question and explore freedom in relationship with God and each other. New churches based on models of radical inclusivity are by nature “mission” based and this reality creates opportunities for the concept of church to be revisited with a balanced purpose of inreach and outreach.

In the next three years I hope to further explore the challenges and the possibilities that make us a unique worshiping community. It is my goal to synthesize these materials into a body of

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work that will both reflect this experience and offer support to those in similar situations. Doing so will require further documentation of the initial development of OPUCC and will likely include further interviews with those who were part of the initial experience as well as those who have joined more recently. Through my involvement with the Illinois Conference I anticipate opportunities to conduct interviews and learn from others in the process of creating or those who have previously been involved in the creation of New Church Starts.

I am truly excited at the prospect of this opportunity and how it will grow us in new and unexpected ways. I thank you for your encouragement to apply to the program and for your continued support. Together we serve,
Rev. Curran R. Reichert

CHANGES, CHANGES, CHANGES...

IN WORSHIP SERVICE TIMES

Please join us on Sunday, June 4 for our FINAL 4:00 pm worship service. During this worshipful gathering there will be fun intergenerational activities before dinner and we will end the evening with a brief closing worship service. Ya'll Come!

In **July** and **August** we will worship at 9:30 am every Sunday except July 30 which is a Jubilee Sunday – on this day we will participate in a service project. More info soon.

Starting in September our Worship Service will resume at 10:30 am **every** Sunday except October 29 and December 31, which are the 5th Sundays of the month or Jubilee Sundays.

and TEAM MEETING SCHEDULES

While the group team meeting format has been beneficial, the team chairs have decided to shift to a new model beginning in August. At this time the chairperson will set up a schedule to meet with their team determined by the

project and/or responsibility of their team. It is recommended that teams meet quarterly for 2-3 hours to engage in long range planning. Sub teams will arrange to meet as needed to accomplish the teams' goals and objectives.

Please attend the last team meeting June 13 to discuss this concept more thoroughly and so that we can tie up the year on the same page.

ALL team members are strongly encouraged to attend the June 13th meeting at 7:00 pm.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

Mark your calendars now for Open Prairie's first ever Vacation Bible School. The Christian Education Team is planning to combine with other area UCC churches to offer a great program. The dates are August 7-11 from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. with activities happening at OPUCC and ending with the opportunity for all to go swimming at Alexander Pool each afternoon.

We need more Sunday School Teachers! Please contact any member of the Christian Education team if you are interested in learning more about what you can do to help teach and plan Christian Education youth events. Special thanks to everyone who helped put together the college boxes that went out after Jubilee Sunday. We sent out 16 boxes with various toys, snacks, and supplies in them. Response has been very appreciative! Great job!

Summer Camp! It's not just for kids! There are plenty of opportunities for youth and adults to attend any one of the numerous summer camps at both Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill Camp this summer. Scholarships are available by contacting Wendy. There are brochures in the Church Lobby. Be sure to pick one up.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

Our high school seniors were honored during worship on Sunday, May 21st. The Open Prairie family sends our blessings to the following young people as they begin the next chapter of their journey:

Jared Bartman
Adam Baumann
Tom Beneke
Carl Carman
Lauren Flowers
Jared Jagers
Trishia Jones
Creal Zearing

The Youth Group extends many, many *THANKS* to everyone who helped make the third annual Arts Festival and Potato Bar a fun-filled and successful event! Thanks to those who bid, performed, set-up, ate, cooked, decorated, listened, cleaned-up, organized, applauded, auctioned, donated.....all of you! The total raised that Sunday afternoon is \$3,000. All proceeds will help us get to the Appalachians this summer for our mission trip. Thank you, thank you, and thank you!

OPUCC Sr. High 2006 Mission Trip

Nine youth and three adults will leave Princeton, IL on July 7th at 4:00 pm and travel to Cincinnati, Ohio. We will stay overnight in a UCC Church. Saturday will be our day to relax and have some fun – Kings Island and a water park will keep us entertained.

We will leave Ohio early Sunday morning and travel 6½ hours to the Appalachian South Folklife Center in Pipestem, West Virginia. Work projects for our group will be predetermined based on our group's skill level. We will be expected to work 6 hours a day Monday through Friday. Our group will be working for one family in the area. Projects could include home repair, painting, maintenance, yard work and more. We hope to complete our job in one week.

Recreational and educational opportunities abound in this area: hiking in the state park, rock climbing, horseback riding, swimming, and white water rafting. Two of our cultural programs will be Square Dancing and a handmade pottery demonstration.

Our housing will be in rustic dorms with electricity and running water - bathrooms and showers will be shared.

This trip will educate us about life in the Appalachians. We can be thinking about comparing the Native American Culture and the Appalachian Culture.

We will report our adventures in church on July 23. We appreciate all the support you give us to enable us to go on this mission.

Please keep us in your prayers.

Kathy Hornbaker

STEWARDSHIP TEAM

Building Funding Campaign

Now that we've passed our first year anniversary of acquiring the building, it's time to update you on our progress. Watch your mail for a letter from the Stewardship Committee, in which we'll break down the numbers and provide a verification of your contribution, your pledge, and any balance remaining. Your personal numbers will be known only to you, but the overall finances, as always, will be fully disclosed.

The Stewardship Team is charged with monitoring our church finances, and helping the church develop plans for funding our internal needs, missions, and of course, debt elimination. Ideas and assistance are always welcome. More later....

Stewardship Team

“STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH”

Special mission offering

June 11 (note change of date)

Why should we support the special mission offering of Strengthen the Church? In an effort to understand the importance and the purpose of Strengthen the Church and the work it supports, we need to only be reminded of the financial assistance Open Prairie has received from this UCC 5 for 5 special offering.

Through this designated mission offering, Open Prairie has turned our money around by applying and receiving financial resources for the last three years. The first year a \$12,500 grant was received, the next year \$20,000, then this year, \$25,000.

The National UCC leadership grant helps to fund the salary of our Christian Education Leader, Wendy Croisant. The LEEAP Grant from UCC Regional, Illinois Conference financed our leadership attendance at UCC National Conferences. Among other things it helped us balance our budget this year and for the last two years.

Open Prairie is committed to be a truly mission centered congregation. Thanks to your generosity we fully support our Church's Wider Mission and have been a 5 for 5 church for the last two years. Quite an accomplishment!

When June 11th rolls around, our generous gifts to Strengthen the Church special mission offering will indicate our appreciation to the Church's Wider Mission for being there for us and helping to inspire us to start a new church. Patricia Wilson

CORRESPONDENCE

To everyone at Open Prairie –
The May Day baskets and flowers were adorable and brought so much joy to everyone who received them! You're a blessing to us all!
Thanks so much,
Stephanie Cartwright, Freedom House

Thank you very much for the goodies during my final week of school. Everything came in handy for me to excel through the tests and the end of my first year at college.

Thanks again!

Scott Bickerman

Dear Open Prairie,

Thank you so much for the box of goodies that you sent to me at college! It was so nice of you all. It was a wonderful surprise, and I really appreciate you thinking of me while I have been away. I apologize for not coming to church in so long. Classes are finally over, so I should be coming in sometime soon! I just need to get some things settled. I hope you all have been doing well and you're enjoying the new home for our church. I can't wait to see it! You are all in my prayers.

Much love,

Ashley Kasperski

Recently I received comments from two different individuals on the same afternoon regarding the youth group's potato bar fund raiser. Neither of these individuals is a member of Open Prairie. They were invited to come enjoy the afternoon by a friend of theirs that is a member. They both had a wonderful time and were very impressed with the involvement of our youth. "They didn't leave the work to their parents"!

They noted how the youth were willing to provide entertainment, donate their services and how they worked tirelessly in the kitchen! Yes, fundraising is the ultimate goal for the afternoon. However, seeing the kids arrive at noon and leave at 8:00 pm -- laughing, problem solving, singing, working together, building the foundation for their summer trip – you know that this experience will provide much more than the dollars earned.

-Marcie Jagers

GREETINGS from the MISSION TEAM

Thank you to everyone who attended our Jubilee Sunday worship service on the fifth Sunday of April and helped to make May baskets for Freedom House and those Open Prairie folk who find it difficult to attend church. Kathy Hornbaker brought lots of beautiful flowers and Dawn Rudolph led us through the process of making the baskets. A good time was had by all. Thank you Dawn and Kathy!

We collected One hundred and thirty one dollars for our Freedom House perennial garden project. Thanks everybody! The Hornbakers have generously offered to sell us the perennials at wholesale so we should be able to create something really beautiful and lasting for Freedom House's private courtyard. Thank you Hornbakers. We love you.

The Food Pantry has requested we donate macaroni and cheese for the month of June. Margaret Autrey, our noble food pantry liason, will be on vacation for the month of June so we are looking for someone or several someones to deliver the donations to the food pantry. Please call the church office if you would be willing to help. Thank you.

The Harry Potter festival is just around the corner! On July 21st Princeton's Main Street will once again be transformed into Diagon Alley where wizards and all manner of magical folk will be out in force. Last year's festival was an absolute blast and a major fund raiser for the Mission Team. This year is going to be bigger and better with lots of new events and activities. Once again Open Prairie will take on the fun task of recreating Honeydukes Sweet Shop. Adam will soon be making thousands of chocolate frogs! We would very much like to have more baked goods this year, so if you like to bake please get in touch with me. We will also need people to serve

popcorn and soda at the outdoor movie which will again be held at the library. We will also need folks to serve Butterbeer, Dragon Snot, and all the delectable candy at Honeydukes. It really was tremendous fun last year and an amazing outreach to the community. Give me a call if you have a fancy to help out. A free chocolate frog to anyone who volunteers.

Peace, Kelly

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 6/04 4:00 pm Intergenerational activities, dinner and brief worship service
6/07 8:00 am Prayer group at Autry's
6/08 6:30 pm Choir at OPUCC
6/11 10:30 am Worship –
Special Collection/Strengthen the Church
6/13 7:00 pm Team Meeting
6/14 8:00 am Prayer group at Autry's
6/15 6:30 pm Choir at OPUCC
6/18 10:30 am Worship – Father's Day
6/21 No prayer group today
6/22 6:30 pm Choir at OPUCC
6/25 10:30 am Worship
6/27 7:00 pm Church Council Meeting
6/28 8:00 am Prayer group at Autry's
6/29 6:30 pm Choir at OPUCC

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

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

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



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CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:

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Church Administrator: Peggy Walley

Hours - Wed. 9-5, Thurs. 11-5, Fri. 9-12

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