

### WORSHIP TEAM

Thank you for your generous response to our request for donations for Hymnals. Your spirit is amazing!

We enter the liturgical season of Lent - a time for reflection and spiritual growth. We began the season with a Taize service on Ash Wednesday. The service was well attended and offered a quiet oasis in a busy world. It was a time to spend on holy ground reflecting on endings and beginnings and a God who teaches us by loving us.

The Lenten Scripture discussions continue to gather at the Pastor's Place on Tuesdays and Saturdays. See the announcement later on in the newsletter for all the details.

Donations are being accepted to help cover the cost of lilies for our Easter Sunday service. Look for the collection flower pot at Sunday morning worship services.

PALM SUNDAY is April 4th. The celebration of Jesus riding triumphantly into Jerusalem is traditionally celebrated with a processional with palms. As palms are incredibly expensive, we ask that people bring their own live greenery as a symbol of praise to wave for this event.

We will gather on the Thursday before Easter to celebrate a Seder supper and worship service at Pilgrim Park. Following this service, we will do a **traveling cross vigil**, which will include a cross, candles, and meditations in a basket. There will be a sign up sheet available for 1 hour, 2 hours or overnight vigils. We ask you to include your address and telephone # and check if the cross needs to be picked up or delivered. Watch the table for the sign-up sheet.

**Easter Services will be at Pilgrim Park at 7:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.**

The Sunrise service at 7:30 a.m. will be a combined service for Open Prairie, Hampshire Colony and Sheffield U.C.C. The service will

be followed by a pancake breakfast. Our Easter service at 10:30 a.m. will be followed by an Easter Egg Hunt.

The official installation of Rev Curran Reichert as our pastor is scheduled for Sunday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. at Pilgrim Park.

Our next meeting is scheduled for March 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the Pastor's Place.

### REMEMBRANCE

Margaret Autrey wrote the following poem and read it at the funeral service for Alice Bryant:

*Her withered hand reaches for mine  
It feels like a wavery song not able to finish  
Left to fade its uncertain melody  
A decrescendo, a murmur, a sigh  
Gentle and patient into silence*

*I look into her faded eyes  
Similar to a new-born's eyes  
Still clouded with timelessness  
Confused by bewildering arpeggios  
Touching the divine  
but hanging on to earthiness*

*Don't go! My every nerve-ending cries  
Keep playing your melodies,  
however weak the tone  
however soft the sound  
however simple the tune  
But her song slips away,  
her silence calm and still  
I am left to keep her song,  
surviving through me*

### POLITICALLY INCORRECT HUMOR

OK folks, this column is in response to a conversation with a newspaper interviewer who recently told me she thought I was "too politically correct." Just to prove that I also have a soft spot for stupid humor, I thought we could run a column every now and again with jokes that poke gentle fun at novel societal peculiarities. (Let's keep 'em relatively tame folks) Paul Goble has shared some wham doozies with me so... Paul, this one is for you!

You Might Be A Member Of A Redneck Church If...

- The finance committee refuses to provide funds for the purchase of a chandelier because none of the members know how to play one.
- People ask, when they learn that Jesus fed the 5,000, whether the two fish were bass or catfish, and what bait was used to catch 'em.
- The pastor says, "I'd like to ask Bubba to help take up the offering," then five guys and two women stand up.
- Opening day of deer season is recognized as an official church holiday.
- A member of the church requests to be buried in his 4-wheel-drive truck because, "It ain't never been in a hole it couldn't get out of."
- The choir is known as the "OK Chorale."
- In a congregation of 500 members, there are only seven last names in the church directory.
- Baptism is referred to as "branding."
- There is a special fundraiser for a new church septic tank.
- Finding and returning lost sheep isn't just a parable.
- High notes on the organ set the dogs on the floor to howling.
- People think "rapture" is what you get when you lift something too heavy.
- The baptismal fountain is a #2 galvanized washtub.

- The choir robes were donated by (and embroidered with the logo from) "Billy Bob's Barbecue."
- The collection plates are really hub caps from a '56 Chevy.

Have a great week, Rev. Reichert

Please send submissions to Marcie by the 15th of the month.

### CORRESPONDENCE

February 19, 2004

*Dear Friends at Open Prairie UCC*

*The ministry of the Prairie Association – our common work in supporting and challenging pastors and lay leaders – can only happen because of your gifts to OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission). Fully 60% of your OCWN contribution underwrites the work of the Prairie Association. We have NO OTHER source of funding by which to support our common work. On behalf of all the pastors and churches of the association, and beyond, thank you for giving generously to OCWM. Your gifts and your prayers are an encouragement to me. Thank you for continuing and, as God enables, increasing your support in 2004.*

*God bless you!*

*Rich Pleva, Association Minister*

*Dear Friends,*

*The gift of love arrived and I beautiful! It also brought with it a breath of Spring! The gift of cards was so helpful – thank you all very much. Love and God Bless, Stella*

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PEACEMAKING IN THE MIDST OF WAR

The good fruits of Peacemaking efforts in the midst of the Colombia War will be the topic of slides and stories in a presentation at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 7, 2004. Jim Fitz from Tiskilwa, of Christian Peacemaker Teams, will be at the Methodist Church in Princeton at 316 S. Church St to share.

When Jim, a strawberry farmer from Tiskilwa was asked to join a Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) in Colombia two years ago, he was not thrilled to leave his family, farm work, and church work in his local Mennonite church. But he accepted the call, feeling strongly that the Lord was calling him to do violence reduction work in this war zone.

Fitz spent two and half months in the fall of 2003 and two months in 2002 helping the CPT team to give protection to 100 farm families in Colombia. These Colombian farm families face armed checkpoints, death lists, fear, kidnappings, gun battles, and food confiscation. He describes frightening encounters with armed guerrillas and paramilitaries, and inspiring, courageous acts of hope from farmers caught in the middle between warring armed groups.

CPT is a Christian ecumenical organization founded by the traditional peace churches (Mennonite, Brethren and Quakers). It places people in areas of conflict throughout the world to help protect people nonviolently by their presence. Teams have also served in Hebron, Iraq, Mexico, Haiti and other places.

"I also learned a lot about how awful war is for civilians and soldiers." Jim said, adding, "I sense the real urgency for Christians to do something about war. It is amazing what a small group of peacemakers whose beliefs are based on the Sermon on the Mount can do against an army."

### PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle was formed early this year for two purposes: to provide a social group to meet monthly and to serve as a liaison to Princeton Church Women United. All women in OPUCC are members of this Circle, participating as they choose. We will meet on the first Wednesday of each month for supper at 6:00 p.m. Our next meeting will be March 3 at 6:00 p.m. at the Garden Room Grille. Please call Donna Chelin to make a reservation or for more information.

### MISSION TEAM

† Our Mission Team invites your support of our local Food Pantry. For the month of March we will collect tuna and noodles. Please bring your donations to worship on Sunday mornings. Thanks for your support!

† Rev. Reichert received the following request from our Association Minister, Rev. Rich Pleva. If anyone is interested or would like more information, please talk to Curran.....

*I'm writing to request your help in securing persons from the Illinois Associations who may share an interest and passion for Wider Church Ministry and Mission Interpretation. As you know, the Wider Church Ministries Group of the Conference Council is hoping to gather such a group (much like the Justice Witness Group) in order to engage our Associations and church leadership in providing meaningful opportunities for information to be shared and involvement encouraged.*

*A meeting is scheduled in Peru on May 15th from 9:00-12 noon in order to gather these persons and begin to look at ways we might encourage our covenantal relationships with our wider church partners. We would like to share a group list with the Conference Council at our April 17th meeting if possible.*

# OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – March 2004 News

## FELLOWSHIP TEAM

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✂ Thanks to all the people who have helped with the "coffee times". It has provided us with a time for fellowship both before and after the church service. If you have not helped and would like to do so, please contact either Becky or Lynette.

## UPCOMING COFFE HOUR SCHEDULE

March 7: Marilyn Calvert  
March 14: Lynette Ivey  
March 21: Terri Zearing  
March 28: Beth Bickerman

✂ Please let Curran know if you, or someone you know, needs to hear from her, i. e. in the hospital, has a personal crisis etc...

✂ Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at Donna Chelin's home.

✂ Please mark your calendar for these upcoming events:

Coffee hour after church on March 21st to honor Helen Marsh.

Easter sunrise service and pancake breakfast at Pilgrim Park. This will be a joint effort with the Sheffield UCC and Hampshire Colony. OPUCC will host the breakfast and will be in charge of flipping pancakes! Please contact Lynette Ivey or Becky Perkins if you are able to help with this event.

Rev. Curran's installation: 3pm April 18th at Pilgrim Park. A reception will follow at 4:00 PM.

✂ Welcome, happy birthday and get well soon! The fellowship team has made a commitment to phone or send a note to visitors who attend our Sunday service for the first time. Plans are also in the works to send birthday greetings and get well wishes to those in our church family.

## FROM THE TREASURER

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### *Youth Fund Raising*

2/1/04	Sub Sales	\$ 647
2/8/04	Sub Sales	\$ 12
2/15/04	Taco Sales	<u>\$ 378</u>
		\$1,037

### *Hymnal Collection*

2/8/04		\$ 395
2/15/04		\$ 478
2/22/04		<u>\$ 284</u>
		\$1,157

## PRAYER GROUP

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A contemplative prayer group gathers at 8:15 a.m. on Wednesday mornings at the home of Hal and Margaret Autrey. We share a reading or prayer, listen to a Tibetan singing bowl, and meditate quietly for about 25 minutes. We close our group with a circle prayer. If you are interested or would like more information, talk to Kathy Hornbaker or Margaret Autrey.

### **CHRISTIAN ED**

**Pilgrim Park Work Project.** On Sunday afternoon, February 8<sup>th</sup>, our Sr. High Youth and 10 church folk helped Wendy tear out carpet in the Conference Center lobby, the upstairs hallway, and in the bedrooms downstairs. A lot of huffing and puffing was going on. It appeared the carpet had been glued to last a lifetime. All of the beds were torn down, labeled and hauled to the downstairs game room. A few snowball fights were held during break. The next popular job was the burn pile. Truckloads of rolled up carpet were driven to the pile and on a chilly day the fire felt good.

Monday morning, February 9<sup>th</sup>, new colorful tile was laid in all of the bedrooms. The upstairs lobby and hallways now has new carpet. We all had fun between the sweat and groans.

### **Sr. High Gift Giving.**

Our tradition of sending Christmas presents to the Reservation did not happen this year. A few obstacles interfered with our new journey. When we gathered in February we decided to use the \$400 from our Super Bowl Sandwich Sales and go shopping. I called Dena and Sylvester Waloke, the deacons at Cherry Creek, South Dakota, and asked what was needed. The list came back with basketball shoes and short socks for the teenage boys and girls, cool pants with the stripe down the sides, sweatshirts, and sweatpants. We purchased all of that and more. Three large boxes were shipped February 12<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to all who supported our sandwich sale.

### **Confirmation Retreat**

Confirmands: Sallee and John Zearing, Evan Hale, Payden Aronson along with Kathy Hornbaker attended the Confirmation Weekend Retreat on February 20-22 at Pilgrim Park. Two youth couldn't attend because of illness. There were 13 churches represented with 81 participants in all. Friday night was filled with games, discussion, and a banner was made for OPUCC. Saturday included 4 workshops

about the following topics: the Illinois Conference by Rich Pleva, Mission Opportunities by Teamous Newburne (very interesting), Global Ministries by Kate Feeney Bastian, and the Labyrinth by Christine Tinker. Then came the fun. The high ropes course was a big hit. John said it was the scariest thing he had ever done! Wendy prepared an Exodus Game for the kids on Saturday night. The kids wore sheets and were to be the Israelites trying to make the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The promised land turned out to be a big bonfire where we burned marshmallows and ate smores. Late Saturday night we walked by candlelight to the cross. A beautiful starlit sky and the quietness seemed to put everyone in a very peaceful state. Each group prepared a part of the closing vespers which took place Sunday morning at 9 a.m. Our group made it to the 10:30 service at the Prouty Building just in time to attend worship again. It was a great weekend!

### **Round Table Talks**

The youth group will have a round table talk on Sunday, March 7. Meet at the Prairie Arts Center at 6:00 p.m. and we will head out to Pilgrim Park.

### **BBQ Luncheon**

The Christian Ed Team, along with the Sr. High Youth, will sponsor a BBQ luncheon following worship on Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendar now and plan to stay for lunch! All proceeds will go toward the summer mission trip.

**AN OPPORTUNITY FOR  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

Tuesdays 3/2, 3/9, 3/16, 3/23, 3/30  
from 5-6:30 p.m.

Saturdays 3/13, 3/20, 3/27, 4/3  
from 10-11:30 a.m.

308 Park Avenue West  
The Pastor's Place

Small group discussion of Scripture and prayer  
with a focus on deepening spirituality  
and getting to know one another.

Both Saturday and Tuesday sessions are the  
same. If you miss on Saturday, you can catch  
up on Tuesday.

**SHEFFIELD FUNDRAISER**

You, your family, your friends, and your neighbors are invited to come to Monical's Pizza for a delicious meal anytime on Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. In return, Monical's will donate 20% of your bill to the 1<sup>st</sup> UCC in Sheffield. A purple flier will be available at church on Sunday. This flier must accompany your order for the donation to be applied. Mark your calendars now!

**WOMEN'S SPRING CELEBRATION**

The Prairie Association Women's Spirituality Event will be held in Prophetstown on Saturday, March 27 from 8:30 am – 3 pm. The theme for this year is "Walk Humbly With God". Call Curran if you are interested in attending.

**STEWARDSHIP**

MEMBERS AND GUESTS. Your stewardship committee will soon be mailing and/or phoning to both members and guests who have been attending to remind you we need your "pledge sheets" if they have not been sent. Perhaps it was overlooked or for the attending guests you have not received a pledge sheet. Either way, we want to invite your stewardship in helping the finances of our new church. If you give, or how large or small your gift, know that you are a welcome part of our church family. Thank you.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**Sunday Mornings**

9:30 am Sunday School at Prouty Building  
10:30 am Worship at Prouty Building

3/03 6:00 pm Prairie Circle @ Garden Room  
3/04 Bloodmobile Volunteers  
6:30 pm Choir Practice  
3/06 6:30 pm Church Volleyball Game  
3/07 6:00 pm Sr. High Round Table Talk  
3/09 5:00 pm Scripture Discussion Group  
3/10 8:15 am Prayer Group  
7:00 pm Church Council  
3/11 6:30 pm Choir Practice  
3/13 10:00 am Scripture Discussion Group  
4:30 pm Church Volleyball Game  
3/16 5:00 pm Scripture Discussion Group  
7:00 pm Worship Team Meeting  
3/17 8:15 am Prayer Group  
3/18 6:30 pm Choir Practice  
3/20 10:00 am Scripture Discussion Group  
6:30 pm Church Volleyball Game  
3/23 5:00 pm Scripture Discussion Group  
3/24 8:15 am Prayer Group  
7:00 pm Fellowship Team @ Donna's  
3/25 6:30 pm Choir Practice  
3/27 10:00 am Scripture Discussion Group  
3/28 11:30 am BBQ Luncheon after Worship  
3/30 5:00 pm Scripture Discussion Group  
3/31 8:15 am Prayer Group

### PASTOR'S MESSAGE

So Much has happened in my first month of ministry with you. First let me say that it is a privilege and an honor to serve such a community. I count myself among the lucky ones to be in the presence of such faith filled, hopeful and dedicated people as yourselves. Your level of commitment has been unwavering and you should feel proud of all you are accomplishing. You are indeed actively fulfilling the mission upon which this church was founded as you daily set about creating a church that is steeped in hospitality and devoted to extending God's radical love to all people. Congratulations you are a wonder indeed!

Lent is not an easy time of year. It does however, offer us an incredible invitation to grow, to deepen and to become more connected to God and to one another. With spiritual growth comes new life, but so to come the little deaths we die along the way to wholeness. We come from a rich theological tradition that offers us many paradigms for new growth and the shedding of dead skin.

The crucifixion is of course, the central model for that transformation in Christianity. As Christians who practice in the name of the Reformed Tradition, however, we choose to focus in larger part on the life and resurrection of Christ for the bulk of our instruction as people of faith. As we meditate this Lenten season on Jesus' journey through the wilderness, we are called to become agents of change in the world. We are called to plant the seeds of new growth in our own hearts and in the hearts of this community at large. The People of Open Prairie UCC are definitely a resurrection people, but let's not miss the opportunity to sink our collective teeth into the liberation journey that is Lent. As we engage in the turning of the soil, as we uncover the ashes of that which has died, and that which is in the process of transformation, let's keep our hearts ever mindful of the freedom that beacons to us from the other side of death.

The freedom that is the liberation of all people.  
The freedom that is the very essence of Jesus the Christ.

May this be a blessed month for you and all you love, Rev. Curran R. Reichert

### CHURCH INFORMATION

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