

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Church Council Meeting 2/22/05

The Council meeting again this month involved a number of very positive discussions. A key highlight was a phone call from Bill Beneke reporting that the City Council had ratified our conditional use permit for the Church's pending new location on East Marion Street! With that major obstacle overcome, plans can be finalized for our new church home. Many thanks to Bill Beneke, Bob Ivey, Rich Hornbaker, and the other Building Committee members for their dedication. Please consider your ability to make a contribution toward the fund in the near future.

The Council also discussed and agreed to move forward with Katie Morrison's official designation as a Parish Associate for Open Prairie. This is a voluntary position but allows us to honor Katie's service to Open Prairie plus allowing her official standing in the UCC, potentially serving in other roles in the UCC as a leader/teacher. More on this later as the position is more clearly defined.

On March 3, the Authorized Ministry Team for the Prairie Association will meet to hear our church's request for full standing in the UCC. The church would then be officially granted standing at the April 23 Prairie Association meeting. This may seem a foregone conclusion but we must remember the 2000 year history of Church!

Pastor Curran has proposed a restructuring of our Team Meeting schedule in which the Teams would all meet on the second Tuesday of each month at one location.

The format would be a short meeting as one group, then break up into teams for one hour to do committee work, then join back to report for the final 20 minutes. The whole evening would be approximately 1.5 hours and would greatly facilitate communication, involvement of additional congregation members, and other benefits. Church Council would continue to meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month. The Council agreed to begin the new format in April.

As always, your input to the Council is welcome. Please feel free to send your comments to our meeting with a member or better still, come join us!

Alan Forristall, Moderator

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

- 3/03 Kelly Autrey-Webber
- 3/04 Bob Ivey
- 3/04 Angie Hughes
- 3/10 Don Schiff
- 3/13 Kathy Hornbaker
- 3/16 Nick Forristall
- 3/21 Jim Sears
Constance Deal
- 3/22 Hazel Crain
- 3/23 Mark Friedrich
- 3/25 Abby Beneke
- 3/26 Patricia Wilson

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

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – March 2005 News

WORSHIP TEAM

Lent, Holy Week & Easter 2005

We are collecting money for **Easter Lilies**. Check the fellowship table on Sunday mornings.

PALM SUNDAY is March 20. 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.

This year we will be sharing our SEDER SUPPER on the Thursday before Easter, March 24, with UCC at Sheffield. We will gather at 6 pm for the Traditional Seder Supper provided by the UCC Sheffield and a taize service at 7 pm led by OPUCC.

Following the Seder Supper and 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 fellowship table for the sign-up sheet on Sunday mornings.

Easter Service, March 27 will be at 8 am at Pilgrim Park. The service will be followed by breakfast and fellowship.

NOTE: Please come early to worship when you have time to help set up - we begin at 9:00 am. There are only a few people trained to set up the sound system, and we really need a few more people who would be able to fill in should the need arise before we move into our permanent home!

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

LENTEN STUDY GROUP

Thursdays March 3, 10, 17
7:00 p.m. at the Pastor's Place

Week One: *Gifts of Loneliness*
Job 3:1-26

Week Two: *Something of an Answer*
Matthew 26:36-46

Week Three: *Devouring Loneliness*
2 Corinthians 11:24-28

Beloved Ones, I implore you take advantage of this time to go deeper with God. As always, Spring will be a busy time for everyone. What better way to begin it than with both feet firmly planted in a healthy spiritual practice? The best way to grow our community is from the inside out.
-Curran

We also continue the Lenten journey in a very special way this year using the book The Cup of Our Lives by Joyce Rupp. Rupp provides readers with daily meditation opportunities as well as group reflection topics. A weekly reflection group gathers after worship on Sunday mornings. A few copies of the book are still available. Talk to Curran for more information.

JANUARY 2005 TREASURER'S REPORT

General Operating Fund

Income:

Pledges \$6,980.00

Contributions \$ 444.00

Interest \$ 189.75

TOTAL \$7,613.75

Expenses: \$4,931.23

OCWM INCOME \$2,136.00 Tsunami Relief
\$ 250.00 Pledges

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Cultivate an Attitude of Gratitude

Greetings in the name of the One who calls us beloved. First let me say Happy Anniversary. Most of you know that Katie and I began our service to Open Prairie one year ago last February. Much has happened in a year, we have all grown in so many ways...for that and for each of you we are eternally thankful.

In a preparation to preach a recent sermon on Exodus 24:12-18, it occurred to me that this passage is about more than Moses' mountain top encounter with God. As I studied the text closely, it became clear to me that Moses did not get to the mountain top without a little help from his friends; namely Aaron and Hur who were responsible for handling any and all disputes in Moses' absence, Joshua who is named in the text as Moses' traveling companion, and the many unnamed people who undergirded Moses and Joshua on their journey much in the way our church members do for any of us who are heading off on Mission Trips. The gathered community offered their support by packing food and necessary items to sustain the two as they traveled, as well one might imagine them keeping constant watch over the mountain by singing, praying and fasting together. The point is that Moses' journey to the mountaintop was a group effort. We have all heard the saying "no man is an island" -- well, likewise no one gets to the mountaintop alone.

We as a society are quick to place blame on individuals and organizations when things go badly, but I wonder how often we as people of faith make the effort to return to individuals and organizations with

reports of success. All too often mountain top moments come and go without much awareness. Have you ever noticed that if someone offers one criticism amidst ten compliments, most people will only remember the criticism? Mountain top moments are like that...we remember our failures far more than we recall our success.

But what about the people who helped make our success possible, do they ever hear from us when things are going well? Does God ever hear from us when things are going well?

What about those who walk quietly beside us while we stumble up the side of the mountain, who are the Joshua's in our lives? Who are the people at the base of the mountain praying for our safe passage? How often do we take the time to thank them for their contributions to our lives? When was the last time any of us went back to someone who was instrumental in our development and offered them a word of gratitude? If Lent is a time of repentance and creating an awareness of that which has separated us from freedom in God...then it is also a time to take stock of those who through the years have stood beside us and cheered us on our way. My invitation is simple, as a spiritual discipline for Lent consider actively cultivating an attitude of gratitude. Give thanks first and often to the Creator who breathes life into all things and follow it up by singing loudly from the mountaintop... thanks to everyone who helped me become who I am today.

May you be blessed by God's grace and peace, Rev. Curran Reichert

MISSION TEAM

Greetings from the Mission Team,

February is whizzing by, and we are very excited about our work this month and the projects we are planning for the year. We wish to welcome Carol Mazzero and Lori Pettee to the Mission Team. Carol's pajamas added a touch of sartorial class to our last meeting.

This month we had the pleasure of helping set up and decorate the fairgrounds for Freedom House's big fundraiser. We have further plans to work with Freedom House in the months to come with a Mother's Day Giving Tree, a flower planting day, and work with Take Back the Night.

We are trying to arrange an Easter Egg hunt with Gateway and look forward to having Leslie Gonigam come to speak with us about the programs at Gateway sometime in April.

We have been in conversation with National Public Radio, and if all goes well, Open Prairie will be advertised as a sponsor beginning in mid March. So, tune in to National Public Radio in March and listen for our very own blurb! Yeehah!

Also, we have been in conversation with Green River Books as they launch into planning for this summer's Harry Potter event. They are planning to turn Main Street into Diagon Alley with magical shops and activities. Open Prairie is hoping to replicate Honeydukes Sweet Shop and serve a variety of delectable goodies including chocolate frogs, butterbeer, cauldron cakes, and of course, fizzing whizzbees! So, dig out your cloaks and wands and plan on some fun this summer.

This month the Food Pantry is asking us to contribute tuna and noodles. Please bring your offerings on Sunday, or place them anytime during the week in Open Prairie's food pantry barrel located in the Prouty Building.

Please feel free to join us on the Mission Team. We are quite jolly, and there is always Carol's pajamas to admire, after all. Our next meeting will be on March 8th at 7:00pm at Margaret Autrey's house.

Peace,
Kelly Autrey-Webber

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

CIRCA '21. Our scheduled trip to *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* is Sunday, March 13. We will gather behind the Prouty Building at 2:45 p.m. to carpool to the Quad Cities. Please contact Lynette Ivey at 872-1105 for more information.

Pizza Hut will donate 15% of lunch and dinner sales to Open Prairie for the first Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each month from November 2004-May 2005. Mark your calendar for **MARCH 7th, 8th, AND 9th and eat pizza!!** Coupons are available at church on Sunday mornings.

The Fellowship Team challenges everyone to **PACK THE PLACE** at Pizza Hut on Wednesday, March 9th at 5:30 p.m. Bring your friends, neighbors and family!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1ST ANNUAL RUMMAGE SALE AT PILGRIM PARK on MAY 6TH & 7TH

All proceeds will be used to help fund the summer camping program at Pilgrim Park Camp, including purchasing program supplies and helping to scholarship campers.

Donations for the sale will be accepted at the camp November 15, 2004 through April 15, 2005. All donations of gently used items for the rummage sale will be accepted including, but not limited to household items, furniture, toys, games, kitchen supplies, clothing and other miscellaneous items. If you are unable to get the items to the camp, please contact the camp at 815-447-2390 and a staff member will arrange for a pick-up to be made.

LET'S BE AN EARTH-FRIENDLY CHURCH. The Illinois EPA generally has a spring hazardous household waste collection day sometime around March or April. Check out their website at www.epa.state.il.us. Click on the link called "Earth 911" where you can type in a zip code and find local information. They even have information for "electronics" clean-up for old computers, printers, etc...

RHOADES SCHOLARSHIP TO BE AWARDED IN THE FALL. (reprinted from www.ivcc.edu) The C. Stephen Rhoades Memorial Scholarship in Philosophy at Illinois Valley Community College has now surpassed the \$5,000 endowment level. Rhoades' widow, N. Dana Collins of Princeton, established the fund last spring following Professor Rhoades' death in

January 2004. Rhoades taught English, literature, and philosophy at IVCC from 1971 to 1999. He served as president of the faculty union, authored the college's Academic Freedom policy and initiated IVCC's Arts and Letters Series. He delivered the IVCC Commencement Address in 1999, the year of his retirement.

"I am delighted the scholarship has become a reality," said Collins. "Steve was a wonderful, dedicated teacher and this scholarship will help to honor that. I am very grateful to all the family, friends and colleagues who have contributed," she added.

Director of Development Fran Brolley said contributions to the scholarship will continue to be accepted. Donations can be sent to the IVCC Foundation Office at 815 N. Orlando Smith Ave., Oglesby, IL 61348-9692. For information call 815-224-0551.

FOR YOUR APRIL CALENDAR!

The Outdoor Ministries Play Day is scheduled for Sunday, April 10th at Pilgrim Park from 2-6 p.m. Reserve that date on your calendar today! There will be games, snacks, hayrack rides, paddle boating, walking tours of the camp and even the high ropes course!

The Youth Group "Annual Art & Music Festival/Baked Potato Bar" fundraiser is scheduled for Sunday, April 24th. This year we will be at the Bureau County Metro Center. Mark your calendars now!

CHRISTIAN ED

Sr. High youth group gathered at the Hornbakers on Sunday, January 30th. We ate sub sandwiches, chips and frozen turtle ice cream cake. (Food always talks!). The Mission Trip was discussed. The term “party church” was taken from the UCC website. The youth gave their interpretations of this term with the following comments: relaxed, celebrate humanity and diversity, not getting into trouble, exciting/progressive and flexible. *“God is having a party and we are all invited. We need friends and companions not judges for our journey.”*

Super Bowl Sandwich Report.

182 sandwiches sold and 32 loaves of bread. The youth group cleared over \$700. Nick, Scott R., Jared J., Lou, Joe, Tara, Trishia, and Carl rolled into the Prouty Building at 7 am and an assembly line was formed. Great group – great FUN! A big thank you to Evan Hale and Michael Zearing who are not in youth group yet, but collected money and sold the extra sandwiches after church.

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle will gather on Wednesday, March 2nd at 6:00 p.m. at the Underground Inn. We will have an important organization meeting at this gathering. Please contact Hazel Crain at 875-3301 for more information.

CHURCH WOMEN UNITED will host World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 4th at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in Princeton. Fellowship time and coffee will be at 9:30 am with the service beginning at 10 am.

ATTENTION LADIES!

Prairie Association
Women’s Spring Celebration

Soul Food

A day of self-care and renewal

Saturday, April 2nd
8:30 – 3:00

Union Congregational UCC
Somonauk, Illinois

This year’s Spring Celebration has been organized by us!!!! Curran leads the team of Mimi Cofoid, Kelly Autrey-Webber, Katie Morrison and Lee Ladenburger serving on the planning committee.

Brochures are available on Sunday mornings with the details of this day of renewal. Three wonderful workshops will be presented:

- Women & Health Care: an issue of mind, body, and spirit presented by Mimi Cofoid, R.N.
- Body Image and images of the divine presented by Rev. Curran Reichert
- Sabbath Keeping presented by Rev. Christine Tinker

A renewal time is also planned including massages, art opportunities, finger labyrinths, and time to browse the latest books and reference materials on self-care.

Cost for the day including lunch is \$10 and reservations are due by March 19th.

Take a day for yourself this Spring!

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday Mornings

10:30 am Worship at Prouty Building
(except Easter Sunday at Pilgrim Park)

3/01	7:00	pm	Worship Team
3/02	8:00	am	Prayer Group
	6:00	pm	Prairie Circle
	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
	7:00	pm	Men's Group
3/03	7:00	pm	Lenten Small Group
3/04	9:30	am	World Day of Prayer
3/08	7:00	pm	Mission Team
3/09	8:00	am	Prayer Group
	5:30	pm	Pizza Hut!
	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
3/10	7:00	pm	Lenten Small Group
3/13	10:30	am	New Member Sunday
	2:45	pm	Circa 21 Trip
3/15	7:00	pm	Christian Ed Team Mtg
3/16	8:00	am	Prayer Group
	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
3/17	7:00	pm	Lenten Small Group
3/20			Palm Sunday
3/23	8:00	am	Prayer Group
	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
3/24	6:00	pm	Seder Meal in Sheffield
	7:00	pm	Maundy Thursday Taize Service in Sheffield
3/27	8:00	am	Easter Sunrise Service at Pilgrim Park
3/29	7:00	pm	Church Council

USHER/GREETER SCHEDULE

March 6	June Harmon & Jan Milles
March 13	Cherie Martin & Ginny Martin
March 20	Hornbakers
March 27	Steve Taylor & Scott Roberts

NEW MEMBER SUNDAY

New Member Sundays will now take place on the 2nd Sunday of the month. We will be welcoming new members on Sunday, March 13th. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Rev. Reichert.

MEN'S GROUP

"GET GOD IN THE GAME: A POKER GROUP FOR GUYS!", an adult men's fellowship, meets on the first Wednesday of the month from 7-9 p.m. – that is March 2nd! All levels of skill are welcome. For more information and this month's location, please call Terry Williams at 872-5308.

CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:
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mail@openprairie.org

Marcie Jagers, Secretary

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