
PASTOR'S MESSAGE

To Journey without being changed

Is to be a nomad.

To change without journeying

Is to be a chameleon.

To journey and to be transformed

By the journey

Is to be a pilgrim.

~Mark Nepo

Beloved Open Prairie Family,

Anyone who has lost a loved one will tell you that grief is a funny thing. It sneaks up on you when you least expect it, takes hold of you and wrestles you to the ground in the most inappropriate moments. Grief is embarrassing because we cannot control it and we fear that when we are in its grasp we are out of control.

This is my last newsletter article as pastor of Open Prairie United Church of Christ. Even writing those words incites a deep grief in my heart that I fear might overwhelm me, but press on I must. I have avoided writing this article precisely because I did not wish to see those words in print - *my last*. This month will play host to my many lasts with OPUCC; my last choir practice, my last communion, my last sermon, my last worship service. And although I trust that God is leading me where I must go, these lasts grieve my heart beyond measure, at moments beyond what I think I can endure.

I have loved you, Open Prairie, with a deep and abiding love that is connected to the heart of God. I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you that a love that is connected through God is a love that never ends. Even as we grieve together and say goodbye to my role in your lives as pastor - there is a bright light shining through the cracks. That light is the love of God that binds us tightly together. I can assure you there will never be a day that goes by that I will not thank God for the gifts that have come to me through my ministry with

you. There will never be a moment when I will have to wonder if the love between us is real. I will continue to honor that love by praying often for this church and the ministry that lies ahead of you. For there is no doubt in my mind that God has great things in store for you. Considering the depth of our bond to one another, I understand how difficult it is to comprehend how the timing of this transition could be right. I know for some of you it feels too soon and will for some time. I had hoped that the necessity of this transition would be obvious to everyone, it has not been. That does not change what is true. I was called to Open Prairie to fulfill a very specific purpose. I was called to help you believe in God and to believe in yourselves. While that is of course an ongoing journey for all of us, I am confident that each of you knows now that you are beloved, called, and equipped to do the work of a justice loving God in Princeton, Illinois and in the world. That is what I came here to do, that is what you called me here to do and now it is time for that message to move from this place to a new group of people. It is time for your history to become your past, and your future to unite you in growing this church and this ministry. Nothing about this transition is easy for me; save for one thing- *the truth floats*. The truth is that the years we have shared in ministry together have shifted the DNA of the planet for the better. We are now and we will always be connected through the love of God and bound by a common ministry to make this world a more welcoming and just place for all God's people. You will always be dear to my heart good people of Open Prairie United Church of Christ. I will tell the story of your courage and strength to anyone who will listen and I will watch with excitement as you continue to live into your dreams.

May God bless you and keep you from this day and forever more.

Love,

Curran



March CALENDAR OF

EVENTS

Mar. 2	noon	Luncheon for Rick & Suzie
Mar. 4	5:00 pm	Stewardship Meeting
Mar. 4	6:45 pm	Interim Search Committee Mtg.
Mar. 5	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Mar. 5	6:00 pm	Prairie Circle
Mar. 6	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's
Mar. 7		World Day of Prayer
Mar. 8	6:00 pm	Dinner & Square Dance
Mar. 9	9:30 am	Combined Sunday School
Mar. 9	10:30 am	Curran's last Sunday
Mar. 12	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Mar. 13	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's
Mar. 16	10:30 pm	Palm Sunday
Mar. 17		Happy St. Patrick's Day!
Mar. 19	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Mar. 19	6:00 pm	Christian Ed. Meeting
Mar. 20	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's
Mar. 22	7:30 pm	Coffee House
Mar. 23	7:00 am	Sunrise Service @ Pilgrim Park
Mar. 23	9:30 am	Easter Egg Hunt
Mar. 23	10:30 am	Easter Worship Service
Mar. 25	7:00 pm	Church Council
Mar. 26	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Mar. 26	8:00 am	Church reserved – Red Cross
Mar. 26	8:30 am	Trip to Children's Museum
Mar. 27	6:30 pm	Choir @ Webber's
Mar. 30	3:00 pm	Bowling with Gateway

Heifer International Update

I just wanted to let everyone know that I went to the recycling center Saturday, Feb 9th and turned in 106 pounds of aluminum cans. This will allow me to donate \$70.00 to Heifer International, for a total of \$125.00 just since November. I truly appreciate everyone who takes the time to bring me cans. People around the world, who are struggling to simply survive, are benefiting from your thoughtfulness.

Thank you,
Jana

😊 HAPPY March BIRTHDAY 😊

Mar. 3	Kelly Autrey-Webber
Mar. 4	Angie Hughes
Mar. 10	Don Schiff
Mar. 13	Kathy Hornbaker
Mar. 16	Nick Forristall
Mar. 21	Jim Sears
Mar. 21	Constance Deal
Mar. 22	Hazel Crain
Mar. 24	Dawn Rudolph
Mar. 25	Abby Beneke
Mar. 26	Patricia Wilson
Mar. 28	Sharon Klingel



If you have any additions or corrections, please let Ami know.

Stewardship and Finance

On **March 16th** we will have the opportunity to contribute to *One Great Hour of Sharing*. As each of us gives to this offering, we help people around the world build lives and communities that are healthy, safe, and sustainable. Since 1949, North American churches have joined together in support of *One Great Hour of Sharing*. The UCC works cooperatively with Church World Service and eight other Christian churches on many mission projects including refugee and immigration networks. Statistics from Church World Service tells us that among the world's people are:

- 12 million refugees and asylum seekers;
- 8 million refugees who've spent five or more years in camps;
- 21 million people forcibly displaced within their own country;
- 41,000 refugees resettled in the U.S. during fiscal year 2006;
- and, the Middle East is the region with the largest number of refugees.

With every gift we offer we are sharing resources and changing lives.

As you contribute your offering, please separate the amount for the general operating fund and the amount for Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM)

on your check or envelope. Remember that OCWM includes basic support of mission and the four special mission offerings throughout the year. *See you in church, Patricia Wilson*

Christian Education

- CE wishes Happy March Birthdays to Angie on the 4th, Kathy on the 13th, Colin on the 21st, and Dawn on the 24th!
- Due to Sunday March 9th being Pastor Curran's last Sunday there will be a combined Sunday School class that day with all ages attending at 9:30, then all youth will participate in worship that day.
- The youth choir will present a song during worship on March 9th.
- Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday. Meet at the church at 9:30 and we will travel to Donna Chelin's house for a special Easter Egg Hunt for all youth. Wear your running shoes that Easter Bunny can be pretty tricky sometimes! We will return to worship immediately following the hunt.
- Mark your calendars now for the 5th annual Potato Bar hosted by the Senior High Youth Group on April 27th! All proceeds from the event are used to help sponsor the trip to Alamosa, Colorado where the youth are continuing the mission of the church by helping to build passive solar adobe homes.
- March 30th is not a Jubilee Sunday this month. We will be having Sunday School as normal.
- March 19th is the next CE Team Meeting at 6 p.m. at the church.
- March 26th the Sunday School youth will plan to take a field trip to the Children's Discovery Museum in Normal where they will have the opportunity to try a number of hands-on activities and interact with each other. All youth and their families are invited to attend. Watch your mail for more information.

Just a reminder. We are continuing to recycle ink jet cartridges. All proceeds are used to help fund the younger youth going to camp.

Peace, Wendy

mission news

Greetings from the Mission Team,

We would like to give a big thank you to the noble souls who pitched in to help Jim Jarvis and Mitch Kloster paint five rooms in the main conference center at Pilgrim Park. Thank you Hal, Lou, Brian, Dawn and Katrina, Angie, Mimi, Nikki, Janis, Susan and Kevin, and Kelly for getting spattered with paint for a good cause. If I forgot anyone who was there please let me know. Naturally I didn't think to write anyone's name down at the time so we are trusting to my overloaded circuits to remember who was there. We had forty people attend our February movie night featuring the award winning and quirky film "The Real Dirt on Farmer John". Preceding the film we enjoyed delicious homemade soup and bread prepared by Ron and his kitchen minions. Thanks too, to all who made the yummy desserts. You helped make it a lovely evening of Open Prairie fellowship. Our next film night will be in April. Don't forget, on March 30th we will be hosting a bowling party for our Gateway neighbors. You may recall that last year our Mary Beth beat everyone hollow. We plan to bowl from 3 to 5:30. If you would like to help with treats or drinks please see Susan or Kelly.

Thank you all for your food pantry contributions last month. Hal and Margaret said our last donation was well over fifty pounds. The food pantry has requested Tuna and Noodles for the month of March.

*Peace,
Kelly*

DON'T FORGET!

Coffee and chocolate are available to purchase each Sunday. Check out the display in the church office or see Susan Hale to place an order!

**FOOD PANTRY FOR MARCH:
Tuna and Noodles**



Rev. Curran Reichert
308 Park Ave W
Princeton, IL 61356
revreichert@openprairie.org
Church Web Site: www.openprairie.org

Going Away Party!

On Saturday, March 8th, Open Prairie will host a
Going Away Party in honor of
Rev. Curran Reichert.

Everyone is invited to come and celebrate Curran's ministry to Open Prairie and to wish her well as she moves to California.

A Pot-Luck dinner at 6:00 pm will start the festivities, followed by a good old-fashioned Square Dance at 7:00 pm! Our musical entertainment will be provided by the Giesel Family Band from Peoria and Gail Hintze will be our square dance caller.

A free-will offering will be taken for the band with a suggested amount of \$5/person.

We look forward to seeing everyone!



Prairie Circle News

The next Prairie Circle meeting will be Wednesday, March 5th, 6:00 pm at the home of Becky Perkins, 406 N. Euclid Ave., Princeton. Please bring a covered dish to share.

Church Council News

The next Church Council meeting will be Tuesday, March 25th, 7:00 pm.

From the Moderator:

To update you on our interim pastor search. We have reviewed resumes and will now conduct telephone interviews.

Thank you to Curran on her 4 years of service to Open Prairie. She has been a blessing to our congregation. I know she will be a blessing to her new congregation as well. God speed to Curran and Katie as they settle into their new home in California.

Bill Ollila

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