

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – November 2004 News

CORRESPONDENCE

*Open Prairie Family,
Thank you so much for the wonderful package you sent. It was a truly wonderful surprise when I returned to school from fall break. I really appreciate you taking the time to think of me. Thank you also for the beautiful notes that were included. It was a perfect way to start the second half of this semester.*

It was great to see you all while I was home and I look forward to seeing everyone around Thanksgiving. Again, thank you very much. My best wishes to everyone.

-Dawn Nissen

*Dear Open Prairie,
Thank you so much for the Halloween care package!!! It was a really unexpected treat and I've already broken in to several of the things you sent (especially the candy, of course). Also the notes you enclosed were great. Gave me the boost I needed to finish my analytical essay on Canterbury Tales (snore). Hopefully I will see you all over Thanksgiving break – that looks like the first full weekend I'll be able to be home! This semester has been a little crazy but what can I expect from senior year?! Thanks again for the care package – it was really thoughtful. Hopefully all is well in P-ton!*

-Love, Katie Forristall

Thanx so much for the goody box for my birthday. It was really, really thoughtful of everyone at OPUCC. It is always really nice to hear from the outside world.

*Thanx a lot, Joe Zearing
(received via e-mail)*

*To Everyone at Open Prairie Church,
Thanks so much for all the hamburger and hot dog buns! The kids loved the cook-out! Thanks for thinking of us. We really appreciate your thoughtfulness. Take care and God bless,*

*-Stephanie Cartwright
Freedom House*

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle meets on the first Wednesday of each month for supper at 6:00 p.m. Our next meeting will be Wednesday, November 3rd at Margaret Autrey's home. Dinner will be provided. A donation of \$5 will be taken. Make checks payable to Open Prairie Church. Please sign up at church on Sunday or call Margaret at 879-9074.

MORE PECANS HAVE ARRIVED! Prairie Circle is selling one pound bags of delicious Calhoun pecan halves for \$7.00. You can buy pecans at church on Sunday mornings or by calling Donna Chelin (875-2060) or the church office (659-3432).

BLOODMOBILE COOKIES. As part of our commitment to Church Women United, it is our turn to provide 45 dozen cookies for the bloodmobile on Thursday, November 4th. Thanks to everyone who signed up at our last Prairie Circle meeting to bring cookies!

OUR DECEMBER MEETING date has been changed to Tuesday, December 7th. Please make a note of this.

MISSION TEAM

Greetings from the mission team, We now have a barrel for Food Pantry contributions, which will live in the Prouty Building throughout the week. Hopefully this will encourage giving from the wider community and serve to keep Open Prairie's name in the public eye associated with happy, positive things. The Food Pantry would like us to collect canned fruit for the month of November. So remember this time of year, as always, the Food Pantry needs our help. Thank you for your past donations and your future ones.

With the Christmas Season approaching we are making plans to sponsor several families or individuals in our community who are in need. The Mission Team and the Christian Ed Team are combining efforts on this *Giving Tree Project*. On Sundays, November 28 and December 12 church folk will have an opportunity to take an ornament that lists a gift you can purchase. Gifts need to be dropped off at the Pastor's Place by December 18th or brought to worship by December 19th. If anyone would like to be involved in this project, please contact Kelly or come to our next meeting which will be Tuesday, November 2nd at 7:00 p.m. at Curran's home.

Peace, Kelly Autrey-Webber

USHER/GREETER SCHEDULE

11/7 Lark Fisher & Donna Chelin
11/14 Molly Hornbaker & Marilyn Calvert
11/21 John & Michael Zearing
11/28 Janis Land & Suzie Stalter

CHRISTIAN ED

- **Sr. High** youth. We served a very successful soup luncheon following worship at Pilgrim Park on October 17th. The proceeds of \$322 will go toward next summer's mission trip. Thanks for your generous donations.

On Sunday, October 24th, we loaded up the white van for a road trip to Chicago. We stopped at IMSA and picked up Carl & Joe. We enjoyed "the bean" and all the sites at the new Millenium Park. We visited the Art Institute, ate pizza and laughed at the NeoFuturists Theater "Too Much Light Makes The Baby Go Blind". Thanks to Al & Mary Forristall for filling in as driver/sponsor at the last minute.

- **Confirmation Class** News. Some of our youth will be baptized at worship on Sunday, October 31st. Confirmation is scheduled for Sunday, November 21st. Worship that Sunday will take place at Pilgrim Park at 10:30 a.m. followed by our Thanksgiving Potluck meal. We hope you can join us for Confirmation to celebrate these very special young people.

- **ADULT EDUCATION**

Studying Homosexuality and the Bible, led by Katie Morrison, continues to gather on Sundays (10/31, 11/7, 11/14) from 2-4 p.m.

Deepening Spirituality. Wednesdays in Advent. December 1, 8, 15 and 22 from 6-7:30 p.m.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,
Congratulations on a successful Annual Meeting. It was wonderful to have so many folks turn out for this important family gathering. For those of you who were not able to attend, highlights included updates from all the Team Leaders and an exceptional lunch hosted by our Senior Highers, (with the support of our wonderful Senior High parents) and as always our Moderator, Al Forristall led a terrific meeting. Many thanks to everyone who participated, we are truly blest to have such quality leadership and overall community participation. I am proud to serve a group of folks so committed spreading God's love with a spirit of abundance and generosity.

As we look to another season of worshiping and learning together, I am spending a lot of time lately projecting ahead to Advent and Christmas. Nonetheless, I try to keep reminding myself that it is also important to stay grounded in the lessons of today, and they are many. To that end, I often find that through the week as I am preparing for Sunday -one of the resources to which I consistently turn is the work of the Rev. John Shelby Spong. His writings are current, theologically sound and offer helpful commentary on issues of importance to me and to our community. In this newsletter I would like to share with you one of his most recent articles that I feel deserves to be read in its entirety. I hope you find it to be as thought provoking as I did. Remember dear ones, our Call as Reformed Christians is to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Let us never forget our place in the family of things.

May God continue to bless you richly in the coming season of Thanksgiving, Rev. Curran Reichert

Question and Answer
With John Shelby Spong

Merrit via the Internet writes:
I am dismayed by poll results that show consistently that people who attend church regularly are more likely to support the war in Iraq and the people conducting it, than people who are not associated with a religious organization. How can this be? What message are they hearing? Where do they hear it or read it?

Dear Merrit,
You touch a strange dilemma but everything I see agrees with your finding. It is also true that people who attend church regularly are more racially prejudiced, prejudiced against equality for women and prejudiced against homosexual persons. Since all of these things seem inconsistent with the Gospel that I understand, I find this reality embarrassing. But that does not mean that I do not seek to understand it.

Perhaps the clue lies in the fact that people in the South and non-urban parts of the Midwest and the West tend to be churchgoers more than people who live in the Northeast and on the West coast. These regions of our country also tend to be more conservative and perhaps this is reflected in their churches and their church going people.

I was raised in Charlotte, NC, in a very conservative Episcopal Church. That church was not only segregated, its leaders taught me that segregation was the will of God and quoted the Bible to prove it. That

church taught me that women were second-class citizens who could not possibly be priests or bishops and its leaders quoted the Bible to prove that patriarchy was the will of God. That church taught me that homosexuality was either a mental illness that needed to be cured or a moral depravity that needed to be converted, and of course, its leaders quoted the Bible to prove that homophobia was blessed by God.

Religious figures have frequently taken very prejudiced stands. Early in his life, Jerry Falwell started a segregated academy and called Nelson Mandela a communist, who ought to be imprisoned. He championed Apartheid South Africa as a bulwark against communism in the continent of Africa.

Television evangelist Pat Robertson regularly attacks the feminist movement as family breakers and suggests a high correlation between feminists and lesbians. Some of his anti-homosexual rhetoric surely feeds the prejudices that are abroad.

The South has always had a strong military tradition. Southern senators have historically used their seniority to locate military installations in the South. Military schools like Virginia Military Academy and the Citadel are admired Southern institutions. Every old line Southern democrat from Richard Russell to Huey Long to George Wallace to Lyndon Johnson to Strom Thurmond (he was once a democrat) combined racism with patriotism to build a political majority.

Religion under girded both. Remember that even the KKK was a semi-religious organization who had official chaplains, that

they always spelled 'khaplains' and whose major symbol was a burning cross.

Historically, Christianity has been a barrier breaking religion. In Christ, Paul once asserted, there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, bond or free. Yet Christians throughout the ages have encouraged tribalism with its blessing of war, patriarchy with its denigration of women and slavery and segregation of the races. We have also participated in and blessed wars of religious intolerance despite the fact that Jesus enjoined us "to love our enemies and to bless those who persecute us."

Perhaps the old adage is correct. Christianity has not failed. It simply hasn't yet been tried.

-- John Shelby Spong

MESSIAH CONCERT

I'm currently singing with the Handel Oratorio Society at Augustana College and we're preparing for this year's performances of Handel's Messiah. Performances will be held on Friday, December 10 and Saturday, December 11 at 7:30 pm and Sunday, December 12 at 2:00 pm. Tickets cost either ten or twelve dollars and people should contact me at 309-794-8130 or 815-488-2803 for purchasing details. They can also contact me through e-mail at nicole-kromphardt@augustana.edu with any other questions. Augustana College is in Rock Island, IL, which is about an hour's drive west of Princeton along Interstate 80.

Thanks,
Nikki Kromphardt

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION FALL MEETING is scheduled for Saturday, November 13 at Hampshire Colony UCC. The speaker of the meeting will be Nancy Elsenheimer discussing Natural Church Development (NCD). NCD asserts that all healthy and growing churches demonstrate strong performance in eight quality characteristics, called "vital signs". NCD offers an analytical process that churches can use to evaluate themselves on these vital signs and then implement programs that will enhance their identified strengths and improve any weaknesses. Registration forms with more information will be available at church on Sunday mornings or give Marcie a call at 659-3432.

COMMUNITY COFFEE. The 1st UCC in Sheffield will host their monthly Community Coffee on Saturday, November 6th at their parish hall from 7-10 a.m. They will be featuring their famous fresh baked cinnamon rolls!

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

Coffee Hour: The Fellowship Team is looking for hosts for Sunday morning coffee hours. Coffee, coffee pot, sugar, creamer and all paper products are provided. Hosts for each week need only provide the "treat" and a cold drink if desired. All supplies are conveniently located in the blue Fellowship box stored in the Prouty closet. Set up and clean up are easy. If you are unsure about doing a coffee hour on your own but would be willing to work with a partner please contact Becky Perkins (875-3619) or Lynette Ivey (872-1105) and we will match you with another host. Our goal is to schedule hosts three months in advance. The October through December calendar

still has a couple of open Sundays. The calendar for the next three months will be available on the first Sunday in December. Please consider volunteering your talents for this valuable ministry.

Bake Sale: The Fellowship Team will host a bake sale on Sunday November 21st at Pilgrim Park in conjunction with our Thanksgiving meal. All proceeds will go to Gateway Services. ALL church bakers are invited to donate their specialties. Please mark your calendar and plan to be part of this event.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday Mornings

10:30 am Worship at Prouty Building
(11/21 is at Pilgrim Park)

11/02	7:00	pm	Mission Team Mtg
11/03	8:00	am	Prayer Group
	6:00	pm	Prairie Circle
	7:00	pm	Men's Group
11/04			Bloodmobile Cookies
	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
	8:00	pm	Building Team @ Iveys
11/07	2:00	pm	Adult Ed @ Pastors
11/10	8:00	am	Prayer Group
11/11	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
	8:00	am	Building Team @ Iveys
11/12	7:00	pm	New Members Gathering
11/14	2:00	pm	Adult Ed @ Pastor's Place
11/16	7:00	pm	Christian Ed Meeting
11/17	8:00	am	Prayer Group
11/18	6:30	pm	Choir Practice
	8:00	pm	Building Team @ Iveys
11/21	10:30	am	Worship @ Pilgrim Park CONFIRMATION
	11:30	am	Thanksgiving Meal & Fellowship Bake Sale
11/30	7:00	pm	Council Meeting

A WIN WIN SITUATION for OPEN PRAIRIE

This past Sunday (10/24/04) I attended a training session to prepare congregations to be aware and respond to the response the United Church of Christ is expecting because of a national ad campaign to be run on all three major television networks from December 1 through Christmas. It has been estimated that 70% of the population of the country will see the ad once, and it is estimated that 50 to 60% of the population will see the ad up to five times. The ad runs for 45 seconds, and the cost is \$4,000,000.

The ad features various people--a same sex couple, Latinos, the handicapped, etc. trying to get into a church while bouncers stand at a gate and say "No, Not You." Others are let into the church such as a heterosexual couple. Then the ad cuts to a message from Jesus stating the church is for ALL PEOPLE and that we, the United Church of Christ are a church FOR ALL PEOPLE. A website is given so that individuals will be able to contact their nearest UCC church about services and programs.

I believe this ad is a win win situation for Open Prairie BECAUSE WE HAVE DONE OUR THEOLOGICAL HOMEWORK. By being a Just Peace Church and an Open and Affirming Church we will be ready to receive those who contact us. There are many UCC churches that might not want their names listed as a contact because they are afraid of who might show up at the door as suggested by the ad.

Also, I can think of some who are pleased with what they are, so they might not want to really participate. Consequently, Open Prairie and other Just Peace and ONA

churches could be the ones who really benefit from this ad--a win win situation.

Open Prairie might also network with the other twenty-seven ONA churches in the Illinois Conference. As the Coalition Coordinator, I will do everything possible to make this happen if there are requests.

-Gene Humke

FAITH IN ACTION NEWS

Volunteers wanted! There are people with disabilities who have no friends outside of paid staff. Faith in Action requires as little time as one hour per month. It's all about fun and meeting someone who enjoys the same things you do. All it takes is a desire to have a good time. Right now there are several people who receive support from Gateway who want to make friends with someone who likes to:

- Go to a men's Bible study
- Watch sports on TV
- Exercise at the Met
- Fish
- Pitch horseshoes
- Read books
- Go for coffee
- Go to the movies
- Bowl
- Swim
- Sew

Please consider putting your Faith in Action. Call 875-4548 ext. 36 today to meet a new friend!

BIRTHDAYS for NOVEMBER

11/02 Freida Anderson
11/04 Darrelyn Sligh
11/17 Ed Harmon
11/18 Jim Bickerman
11/27 Paul Ernst

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

MEN'S GROUP

“GET GOD IN THE GAME: A POKER GROUP FOR GUYS!”, a new adult men's fellowship, will gather for the first time at the Williams' home at 715 North Linn in Princeton at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 3rd. All levels of skill are welcome. For more information, please talk to Terry at 872-5308.

FALL FUN

35 people gathered together at beautiful Pilgrim Park for our first annual Inter-generational Jubilee. Following breakfast, we began the morning with a contemplative worship service. We moved into a fabulous prayer workshop led by Susan Hale and Linda Ernst. We created our own altar and art projects. The food was great all day. Katie & Jan led big group games. We did pumpkin carving even though the Japanese beetles threatened to eat us all. It was great fun! We hiked to the cross and had a nature hunt for something that represented ourselves. We had a campfire, s'mores and a wonderful scavenger hunt led by Wendy. A great time was had by all at this wonderful spirit-filled event.

LOOKING AHEAD TO DECEMBER

Deepening Spirituality. Wednesdays in Advent December 1, 8, 15 and 22 from 6-7:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 5th worship will be held at Pilgrim Park at 4:00 p.m. The Sr. High Youth Group will serve a meal following worship. A Healing Service will take place after the meal.

DECEMBER 7th is the date for Prairie Circle's meeting in December. This is a change in date so please make a note on your calendar!

DECEMBER 12th an Advent Event for all ages will take place from 4-5:30 p.m. at the Prouty Building. Stay tuned to the bulletin for more details.

DECEMBER 19th we will have a Christmas Caroling event beginning at 6:00 p.m.

DECEMBER 24th, our Christmas Eve Service will be held at 8:00 p.m. at Pilgrim Park.

CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:
22937 1140 N Ave
Princeton IL 61356
(815) 659-3432
mail@openprairie.org

Marcie Jagers, Secretary

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revreichert@openprairie.org

Church Web Site:
www.openprairie.org

STAY INFORMED

The UCC website at www.ucc.org provides many opportunities to stay informed.

In addition, the “God is Still Speaking” website is an excellent resource at www.stillspeaking.com

Be sure to put our church website at www.openprairie.org in your favorites and keep in touch with upcoming events.

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