

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – November 2005 News

CHURCH COUNCIL

Over the past few days it has become apparent that confusion exists within Open Prairie, regarding the \$44,000 Leadership Grant the church has been awarded. As with all things Open Prairie, we want to communicate as completely as possible with the whole congregation. The following is an attempt to bring us up to date.

The funds will be available to us over the next three years in installments to be used for strengthening our church in a variety of ways. The grant team met in late summer to discuss proposals for the money's best use. The committee felt that strengthening our Christian Ed program and promoting membership (evangelism) were high priorities for further consideration. The committee voiced visions of a potential new staff position to address those needs.

At recent Council meetings, all of the above was further contemplated with a decision to wait until the 2006 stewardship campaign is completed. This will allow the church to consider our overall budget, complete the building project, and better assess the church's needs. On November 20th the Congregation will be asked to vote on our budget for 2006. At that same meeting, the congregation will be asked to engage in a process of re-visioning, a part of which will be assessing ways to meet the Christian education and evangelism needs.

As always, the Council welcomes and encourages everyone's participation at meetings and active involvement in the collective decision making process.

Alan K. Forristall, Moderator

TEAM MEETING

Our next Team Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 8th at 7:00 p.m. at the church. Instead of having meetings four Tuesday nights of the month, all teams meet together once a month for two hours. I look forward to seeing all the teams represented on the 8th. Thanks, Rev. Reichert

ANNOUNCEMENT

A semi-annual congregational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, November 20th, following worship. We will vote at this time on the proposed 2006 church budget. We will also share a Thanksgiving meal together.

ADVENT SMALL GROUP

Curran will offer an Advent Small Group Series on the theme of Wonder. Please note the dates in your calendar: November 30th, December 7th, December 14th at 7:00 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Westchester Community Church, UCC, on behalf of the Illinois Conference Council, would like to invite your congregation to attend an Anniversary of Ordination celebration for Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman. Jane will be recognized for her 25 years with our United Church of Christ and five years with us as our Conference Minister.

WHEN: November 6, 2005
TIME: 2:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
WHERE: Westchester Comm. Church,

No gifts please, but donations to the Angela Bible Fund would be greatly appreciated.

See you there!
Joe Mills, Conference Council President

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Dearest OPUCC Family,
November has arrived! The leaves have fallen and the temperature has dropped, Brrrr. Good news though, fall is a terrific time to recommit to our own faith journeys. It is a season ripe with invitations to get involved, learn more about one another and the world in which we live. November worship services begin on the 6th, with a family oriented celebration of the Saints, followed by an opportunity to explore the ways faith gets handed down from generation to generation. Before the worship service on November 6th, I invite you to give some thought to the Saints in your life who helped to shape your beliefs. What were the special stories you were taught about God, about the importance of loving and making the world a better place? What stories have you in turn passed on to someone in your life? When we come together for our family friendly First Sunday Service at 4 pm, we will share a simple meal and our thoughts on these important faith matters. As we continue to grow the Christian Education component of our ministry, it is crucial that we give prayerful consideration to how and why Christian Education matters. Please make it a priority to be with us for this special service.

In mid-November we will join with over 100 UCC churches across the nation in viewing the eagerly anticipated film, *The Wal-Mart Movie*. What is exciting about this film is that it is not an attack on Wal-Mart, but rather it was designed to be a tool to encourage awareness and inspire us (members of the UCC) to be pro active in working to change Wal-Mart's implementation of unjust policies concerning workers. "I work for Wal-Mart, writes Edward, a UCC member in California." "If you have studied their practices," he continues, "you will know how unrealistic they are. Unequal pay for men and women, poor insurance for high costs,

imported products at about 80 percent of their merchandise. For one of the giants in the retail world, they have not shown any real care and concern for their employees. Please consider looking into this. You will be as distressed as many of us are." The UCC has a long history of calling corporations into fairness and accountability where issues of economic justice are concerned. The following is from the 1997 General Synod resolution, "Affirming Democratic Principles in an Emerging Global Economy."

"[It is] the responsibility of multinational corporations and international financial institutions to respect and hold themselves accountable to fundamental human rights, particularly with regard to child labor, employment of minorities, and wages that are adequate for local costs of living;

[It is] the responsibility of workers to organize for collective bargaining with employers regarding wages, benefits, and working conditions, and the responsibility of employers to respect not only worker rights but also workers' dignity, and to create and maintain a climate conducive to the workers' autonomous decision to organize? ."

I hope you will join us on November 13th, at 5:30 p.m. for a viewing and discussion of the film.

Did I hear someone say TOFURKEY? On the 20th of November, following worship, a discussion of the budget for 2006, AND a full Thanksgiving dinner, we will join together in spirit and body to engage in our semi-annual visioning process. Courtney Sapp, along with other members from Church Council, will lead us through a series of questions designed to help us better understand our mission and purpose in the coming months. We will also hope to come to a final decision regarding the use of the National Leadership Grant.

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And that my friends, is all before Advent begins! See the Worship Team's column for more details on Advent. So, bundle up and make your way over to the new building, for truly God is doing a new thing every day at Open Prairie. I will look forward to seeing you there.

Blessings of peace and abundance,
Rev. Curran Reichert

CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Office:
25 E. Marion St
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 872-5150 mail@openprairie.org

Marcie's Hours:
Tuesday & Thursday 8:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Rev. Curran Reichert
308 Park Ave W
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 872-1661 church phone
revreichert@openprairie.org

Church Web Site: www.openprairie.org

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

NOVEMBER

2 Freida Anderson
4 Darrelyn Sligh
17 Ed Harmon
18 Jim Bickerman
27 Paul Ernst

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

11/02			PIZZA HUT DAY
	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
	5:45	pm	Prairie Circle at Pizza Hut
	7:00	pm	Small Group at church
11/03	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers
11/04	5:00	pm	World Community Day
11/05	8:00	am	Prairie Assoc Fall Mtg
11/06	4:00	pm	Worship Service
	5:00	pm	Meal followed by the movie Hotel Rwanda
11/08			MONICALS PIZZA DAY
	7:00	pm	Team Meeting at church
11/09	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
11/10	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers
11/13	10:30	am	Worship
	5:30	pm	Wal-Mart movie at church
11/16	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
11/17	6:30	pm	Choir at Autrey-Webbers
11/20	10:30	am	Worship Service
	12:00	pm	Thanksgiving Meal and Semi-Annual Meeting
11/24			Thanksgiving Holiday
11/25			Office Closed
11/27	10:30	am	Worship/1 st Sunday of Advent
11/29	7:00	pm	Church Council at church
11/30	8:00	am	Prayer Group at Autreys
11/30	7:00	pm	Advent Small Group at church

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SR. HIGH NEWS

October 23, 2005. 12 youth and 3 adults headed for Chicago. We visited the Millenium Gardens and enjoyed "the bean". The kids divided into groups and discovered State Street and Michigan Avenue. We headed for the Flat Top Grill at 3:30 p.m. Rumor had it that a dessert was needed so we found a Cold Stone ice cream place. Now we were full! We made it to the Neo Futurist Theater by 6:00 p.m. and only had about a 15 minute wait in the drizzle. The 30 plays in 60 minutes were very entertaining. We dropped off a friend at IMSA and made it home by midnight. Some were wired and some were sleepy. Thanks to Wendy and Molly for driving!

Round Table Talks on October 9th. Bless Abby Beneke and Olivia Bettasso for coming. We enjoyed an egg game in the parking lot and blasted music over the PA system while discussing "prayer". We enjoyed warm cookies and then departed. –Kathy

PIZZA! PIZZA!

Here at Open Prairie, pizza is our middle name! Remember, this type of fundraising is one of the easiest ways to generate some additional income.

Pizza Hut will donate back to us for all sales on Wednesday, November 2nd and Wednesday, December 7th.

Monicals will donate back to us for all sales on Tuesday, November 8th.

Be sure to pick up a form at church to take with you!

OH NUTS!

One pound bags of tasty pecan halves are available for sale! You can pick up a bag or two anytime at the church office or Sunday mornings. Cost \$8.00.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The closet in the church office reception area has mailboxes for each team, the pastor, the treasurer, the moderator and the choir. If you need to communicate anything with these folks, feel free to drop off your information in their mailbox. Those folks who represent teams are asked to remember to check your mailbox frequently!

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP TIME

The worship team announces the following schedule on Christmas Eve:

7:30 pm	Refreshments
7:45 pm	Caroling
8:00 pm	Worship Service

CORRESPONDENCE

Greetings to Everyone at OPUCC!

What a delight it was to spend the day with you as you dedicated your new church house! Thanks so much for the gift you presented me that day. The photo will remind me of you and will prompt me to pray God's blessings on you in ever new and surprising ways!

-Rich Pleva

HURRICANE NEWS

Friends, Partners, and Witnesses!

Thanks can hardly express what we in South Central Conference feel toward each of you. Your prayers, concern and help have come as a mighty blessing from God - and we give thanks! God is good - All the time!

I am especially grateful that a full-time Coordinator for Disaster Recovery has been called. The Rev. Alan Coe, a UCC pastor with extensive training in disaster recovery, will relocate with his wife, Maureen, to the New Orleans area and begin work about Nov. 15. Alan will arrange and coordinate work camp crews coming to the area as well as communicate and help interpret the recovery to all of us. His presence will be a huge encouragement to our New Orleans folks - and to the people of Lake Charles and Beaumont.

Most of our churches, affected so much by Katrina and Rita have been "adopted" - several by Conferences and some by local churches. Some of the "adopters" can use additional help with the support, so your offers of help can still be focused on a particular church. Please let us know of other partnering you would like to do. Of particular concern are - Salem, New Orleans, Woodbury in Lake Charles, and Plymouth in Beaumont.

In an effort to track giving, maintain some equity in support, and because many of the churches involved do not have banking access, we are asking that your support contributions be sent to the South Central Conference, either designated or for general relief. IF YOU HAVE FUNDS THAT ARE DESIGNATED FOR HURRICANE RELIEF, please send them to South Central Conference as soon as you can. The SCC UCC address is 6633 Hwy 290 East, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78723.

At some time in the future, a more direct funding option will be used as churches and

banking facilities become more able and available.

As Work camp activity becomes possible - in the next few weeks, let me suggest some guidelines that will help both Rev. Coe and our National UCC Volunteer Ministries (Rev Mary Shaller Blaufuss - blaufusm@ucc.org) immensely.

The "adopted" congregation will take the lead in determining what is needed for their congregation / church building, etc.

Where several "adopters" are partnered with a congregation, Alan and/or Mary will provide the communication links. Alan and Mary need to stay in the loop of communication and plans.

Travel to a site should be cleared with Alan and the local congregation contact.

All volunteers are asked to use the "Volunteer Ministry Application Form" at ucc.org. It contains valuable information. Hopefully these guidelines will assure an organized and well-planned recovery action. We have been able to "match up" a number of conferences and churches with the affected congregations, and you will be receiving a note with more specific information.

Blessings and Thanks to each of you. Please, if there are questions, just ask. Much of this is new to me and suggestions are welcome, though not necessarily followed?! Peace!

Bill Royster - Interim Conference Minister,
South Central Conference - UCC

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle meets the first Wednesday night of every month to share a meal. On November 2nd we will gather at Pizza Hut at 5:45 p.m. This is open to all the women of Open Prairie and their pals. For more information call Lynette Ivey at 872-1105

NEWS FROM THE PADS SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS

Volunteers are needed! Anyone or any group interested in working as part of a volunteer team can contact the church office for more information. ALSO the following is a list of items that are always needed: paper towels and paper plates, bath towels and wash clothes, disposable razors, coffee and creamer, small containers of shampoo, powered drink mixes and nonperishable food items (mac and cheese, soup, crackers, canned goods), laundry soap, solid deodorants, and cleaning products like soft scrub or dish soap. We especially need gift certificates to the fast food places nearby so folks can go in and get a cup of coffee and warm up during the day. Or, gift certificates to the local retail stores so they can buy personal items that they may need.

MISSION TEAM

Greetings from the Mission Team, Open Prairie was represented on Main Street for Princeton's Fall Festival last weekend. We sold Terri Zearing's yummy goodies, Donna Chelin's excellent Prairie Kitchen Mints, and Adam's famous chocolate frogs and rats. Thank you to Patricia Wilson, Margaret Autrey, Beth Forristall, Lynette Ivey (Don't go Lynette), and Janis Land for volunteering their precious time to help the Mission Team raise some dough.

Our organic vegetable season is over, alas, but it sure was good while it lasted. If anyone would like to sign up for the organic produce experience who missed out this year or if you would just like to know a bit more about it, let me know. Coneflower Farm will be happy to send you information. There is a wonderful www.organicconsumers.org website, that offers opportunities to take a more active stand for

Organic Agriculture, Fair Trade, and Environmental issues. I love it.

Open Prairie was recently featured in the October 29th issue of the News Tribune. We had a special advertisement and an article in the special insert section that Saturday. Thank you, Lark, for offering your time and talent to make the ad look so sharp.

Mark you calendars for November 13th at 5:30! The Mission Team is hosting a premiere film event. Yeeha! We will be joining oodles of other churches across the country in showing the independent film, "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices". The UCC is sponsoring this film in coordination with CLUE (Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice), Interfaith Worker Justice, Unitarian Universalists, Progressive Jewish Alliance, African American Ministers in Action, The Jewish Federation, Ignatian Solidarity Network, and Sojourners. Whew! Come watch the film and join a discussion afterward which will be accompanied with yummy treats (thank you Becky), and good fellowship.

In December, we will be having our Christmas Giving Tree in coordination with Gateway Services. Like last year, the tree will hold ornaments, each with the name of a Gateway client written on it, and we will purchase the gifts and return them wrapped to be delivered in good time. Our Giving Tree will make its appearance on December 4th.

Thank you for everyone who brought in cake mixes this past month. Our barrel from the Prouty Building went the way of all things, but we will have an official container in church this Sunday. The Food Pantry wishes us to contribute tins of fruit for the month of November.

Peace to you all,, Kelly

WORSHIP TEAM

A reminder that the first Sunday of each month will be an evening service beginning at 4:00 p.m., with a simple supper to follow. We will be trying to make these a more family-friendly service, but child-care will be provided when it looks like we'll be digging deeper in terms of adult Christian ed. On November 6th we will view and discuss the movie Hotel Rwanda following our meal. Our December service, December 4, definitely will have a kid-friendly component as it will be a "Hanging of the Greens" at Open Prairie. Please plan to attend.

Folks interested in participating on a Church Arts Team, please contact Ron McCutchan. This team will work with the Worship Team on seasonal displays and also working on arts-related projects not necessarily tied to worship. Creative-types, of course, are invited, but anyone (of any age) interested in helping out with hands or ideas are ENCOURAGED to participate. Our first "assignment" will be for Advent, which begins November 27th.

Our Advent journey this year will include exploration of the multitude of feelings that we often experience in this Holy and complex season--hope and doubt, joy and vulnerability, certainty and unknowing. For some, Advent is a joyous time spent looking forward to a time with family, friends, and favorite traditions. For others the Christmas miracle seems distant and hard to comprehend. Like Mary we are often troubled -- with unrealizable plans, failed hopes, "busy-ness" and fatigue. Also, like Mary, we hope to arrive together to a place of awe and wonder at the new hope the Christ child brings. Our intention with advent this year is to hold these very real tensions as we dialogue and discuss our own journeys to faithfulness and the search for a meaningful relationship with Christ.

Speaking of Advent--in a twist on OPUCC's "bring your own candle to Christmas" tradition, we'd like to ask each household to loan a candle (or two) and a candlestick/holder to the church during Advent, as a way to show Open Prairie's diversity and as a way of bringing our own "light of faith" to our greater church community. The holders can be simple or elaborate, and hand-made holders are as welcome as polished brass or crystal. Please label your candlestick so we can get it back to you, though the plan is that we'll use them for the candlelight service on Christmas Eve and each household can take them home after the service. We'll have a sign-up sheet (so you know which Sunday to bring your candlestick in) beginning on November 13.

The choir is planning an evening community carol concert on December 18th. This will be a carol-sing plus the choir will do some of our favorite Christmas pieces. A free-will offering will be taken with proceeds to go towards building maintenance. Pencil it in for that weekend and we'll let you know more in the December newsletter and in the church bulletin.

WORLD COMMUNITY DAY

Church Women United will host their annual World Community Day "A Light to the Nations" on Friday, November 4th at the Covenant Church at 24 N. Main Street. World Community Day is an annual event that brings together Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and other Christian women in a common worship experience that focuses on issues of peace and justice. A soup meal will be served at 5:00 p.m. with the program to follow at 6:00 p.m. Carol Kuhnert has represented our church as the organizer of this event. Please plan to attend.

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COMMUNITY COFFEE

Our friends and neighbors at 1st United Church of Christ in Sheffield will host their monthly community coffee on Saturday, November 5th from 7-10 a.m. at their church. Bring a friend and stay a minute or stay the morning!

DOCUMENTARY PREMIER

The UCC Justice & Witness Ministries is part of a national alliance supporting Robert Greenwald's upcoming documentary: "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices.". Open Prairie will host a screening of this film on Sunday, November 13th at 5:30 p.m. at the church.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PRAYER

A contemplative prayer group gathers every Wednesday morning at the home of Hal & Margaret Autrey from 8:00-8:45 a.m. We open our prayer time with the reading of a prayer, poem or Scripture. We then begin 25 minutes of contemplative prayer & meditation with the sound of a singing bowl. We conclude with a time for joys and concerns. We extend an invitation to anyone interested to talk to Margaret Autrey or Kathy Hornbaker, or stop by on a Wednesday morning to join us!