

OPEN PRAIRIE UCC – September 2005 News

THE BIG WEEKEND!

The big weekend for dedicating our new church home is fast approaching. Hopefully everyone has September 17th and 18th highlighted in their calendars! Here are the details!

September 17 Wine Tasting & Cabaret:

At 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 17, Open Prairie will open its new doors at 25 East Marion to the community for what should be a very fun event! This will be an evening of music featuring cabaret artists Rev. Curran Reichert and Dr. Adam Webber with a wine-tasting provided by Rudy's Liquors in Peru. This is a NOT TO MISS show!. All are welcome. Alternative beverages will be served. \$10 cover charge.

September 18

The dedication of the building will take place during our 10:30 a.m. worship service at 25 E. Marion. We are honored to welcome Rev. Nancy Nelson Elsenheimer from the UCC national office and our Association Minister, Rev. Dr. Rich Pleva, as our special guests. This will be Rich's last visit with our church family as he leaves his post and moves on in his ministry.

Later in the day, we will share a potluck meal beginning at 4:00 p.m. At 5:00 p.m. there will be a brief dedication ceremony welcoming area congregations and clergy who might otherwise be occupied in the morning. The evening will conclude with a barn dance following the dedication. Jim Hix from Chillicothe will be our live caller for the dance and we will also have a live string band providing music. A free will offering will be collected to pay the band and caller. This will be loads of fun for folks of all ages! Don't miss this chance to celebrate our new church home.

WORSHIP NOTES

Worship Time has returned to 10:30 a.m. at our new building – 25 E. Marion.

OPEN TABLE

Open Table is a small group, sponsored by Open Prairie, specifically designed to support GLBT people within our community. It is open to all regardless of church affiliation. Some dates to reserve:

- GLBT focused adult education series meeting at church at 1:00 p.m.. All are welcome.
 - October 16 Homosexuality and the Bible
 - October 23 Issues facing GLBT community: aging, parenting, and coping
 - October 30 Activism 101.
- October 22. All-inclusive Halloween Party hosted by Suzie Stalter & Janis Land. Costume required.
- October 28 & 29 Coalition gathering at Pilgrim Park. Contact Gene Humke at 309-699-5941
- December 16 Open Table Christmas Party at 25 East Marion

If you have ideas for a gathering space, activities or places, please contact Rev. Curran Reichert and she will pass on information to the group.

TEAM MEETING

Our next Team Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 13th 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 13th. Thanks, Rev. Reichert

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

A new space, a new thang!

Friends, it is all so exciting I can hardly contain myself! Our dream of a new home has become a reality. So many people have been working overtime to make worshiping in our new location on September 4th a reality. I am grateful to each of you and especially to Al, Roger, the two Pauls, Katie, Rich, Donna and Kelly who have been at the building nearly everyday for the last several weeks. Please be sure to extend an extra word of gratitude to them when you get the chance.

There are loads of wonderful program ideas and opportunities on the horizon, so be sure to watch the bulletin closely on Sundays and continue to watch our updates via e-mail and newsletter. If you are not receiving updates via e-mail and wish to be, please check with Marcie, she will be happy to include you on the e-mail list. Below you will find just a couple of things that I personally am really looking forward to.

The Worship Team, with the support of the other Church Teams, has decided to try a fun new approach to worship the first Sunday of the month. Beginning October 2, and every first Sunday thereafter, a family friendly worship service will convene at 4 pm, followed by a light soup and salad meal and an educational experience, usually centering around a film and discussion time.

Young adults are encouraged to participate with the community throughout the whole evening. Young children will be included in the service and suppertime with a special program that is age appropriate provided

for the educational time. We promise to be finished by 8 pm, at the latest, sometimes earlier depending on the topic and length of film.

Subjects and films include, to name just a few:

Hotel Rwanda: a brilliant and touching story about one man's mission to make a difference during the massacres and violence that painfully divided the country he loved.

The Eyes of Tammy Faye: a light hearted, yet haunting look into the birth and institutionalization of the religious right movement.

Amandla: a film about the Apartheid movement in South Africa and the powerful role music played during that important time in the countries history.

The Walmarting of America: Distributed through the UCC, this is a film designed to explore the ways in which this multi-million megastore is destroying small town economies and what we can do to get involved in calling the company to accountability in our community.

We will also find creative ways to explore Stewardship, Mission and Outreach, Health and Wellness issues and more. Our hope is to make this an energetic and engaging way to deepen our faith, stir up thought and promote discussion together in community.

We will of course, be looking for volunteers to help cook, run programs for the young folks, and in general offer some help setting up and cleaning up on these evenings. So, be thinking about your schedules and how you might like to participate.

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I eagerly anticipate the fellowship that lies ahead and the new things we will try together. On behalf of the OPUCC family I invite each of you to spread the word and invite a friend to the new happenings at OPUCC. As always at OPUCC, all are welcome.

Many Blessings,
Rev. Curran Reichert

HURRICANE RESPONSE

For up-to-date news on how the UCC is responding to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and how you can help, log on to www.ucc.org.

CHURCH INFORMATION

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

New Church Office:
25 E. Marion St
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 872-5150

Rev. Curran Reichert
308 Park Ave W
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 872-1661 church phone
(815) 872-1515 home phone
revreichert@openprairie.org

Church Web Site:
www.openprairie.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Worship – 10:30 am at 25 E. Marion on
Sundays

| | | | |
|------|-------|----|--------------------------------|
| 9/01 | 6:30 | pm | Choir Rehearsal |
| 9/07 | 6:00 | pm | Prairie Circle |
| 9/08 | 6:30 | pm | Choir Rehearsal |
| 9/10 | | | Homestead Parade |
| 9/11 | | | First day of Sunday School |
| 9/13 | 7:00 | pm | Monthly Team Meeting |
| 9/15 | 6:30 | pm | Choir Rehearsal |
| 9/17 | 7:00 | pm | Cabaret & Wine Tasting |
| 9/18 | 10:30 | am | Worship/Building Dedication |
| | 4:00 | pm | Potluck & Square Dance |
| 9/20 | 7:00 | pm | Special Council Meeting |
| 9/22 | 6:30 | pm | Choir Rehearsal |
| 9/27 | 7:00 | pm | Council Meeting |

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

| | |
|----|-----------------|
| 3 | David Johnson |
| | Olivia Bettasso |
| 4 | Dawn Nissen |
| 5 | Ray Kuhnert |
| 6 | Sara Hornbaker |
| 8 | Fox Webber |
| 13 | Hal Autrey |
| 16 | Beth Bickerman |
| 17 | Lark Fisher |
| | Tyler McCombs |
| 24 | Molly Hornbaker |
| | Sallee Zearing |
| 25 | Marilyn Calvert |
| | Donna Chelin |

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

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Illinois Conference Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender concerns presents a workshop with Dr. Robert Minor, Professor of Religion at the University of Kansas

Dr. Robert Minor's topic will be "Re-understanding Homophobia: Its Diagnosis and Cure." The workshop will be held Saturday, October 29, 2005, at Pilgrim Park, Dupree Center. The workshop will begin at 10:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. The cost is \$30 per person. Lunch is included.

To register for this event please contact the registrar: Jim Sears, 1178 N. Byerly Hills Drive. East Peoria, IL 61611-1282. His phone number is 309-699-5941, his fax number is 309-699-0743, and his email is jamessearsjr@mchsi.com. Checks should be made out to the Illinois Conference Coalition.

This event is open to Coalition members, ONA church personnel, members of Illinois Conference churches, and the public at-large. Registration is on a first come basis. The deadline for registration is Friday, October 22, 2005. Seating is limited to sixty to seventy-five registrants

SAVE THIS DATE: OCTOBER 29, 2005

PRAIRIE CIRCLE

Prairie Circle meets the first Wednesday night of every month to share a meal. On September 7th we will gather at Wise Guys (just north of McDonald's) at 6:00 p.m. This is open to all the women of Open Prairie and their pals. For more information call Kelly Autrey-Webber at 876-1106.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Illinois Conference UCC Women's Retreat, sponsored by Women in Church & Society, is set for September 30 to October 1 at Pilgrim Park. The retreat leader will be the Rev. Dr. Keran Olm-Stoelting. The theme for the weekend is "And Sarah Laughed"....looking at humor and wisdom in the Bible will no doubt be fun and we'll laugh a lot as well as learn.

Come join your sisters of faith for laughter, play, dance, song and explore the season of your life through humor!

Brochures with all the details are available on Sunday mornings at worship or by calling the church office at 659-3432.

CHRISTIAN ED

Sunday School will begin on Sunday, September 11th.

Pre-school through 5th grade young people will begin their Sundays at worship and will be excused after the first hymn for Sunday School. 6th-8th graders will gather at 9:45 a.m. for class before worship in the youth room.

HOMESTEAD PARADE

Open Prairie will participate with a walking/riding entry in this year's Homestead Festival Parade on Saturday, September 10th. Reserve your space early if you want to ride in the pick-up truck. We'll wear our "God is Still Speaking" or OPUCC t-shirts. We've invited Trinity UCC of Chicago as well as other area UCC churches to join us. Contact Susan Hale at 815-646-4118 with questions.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear O.P.U.C.C. Members, Family, and Friends,

Greetings from a far away place known to me as Rockford College! I have arrived, moved in, unpacked, and found a shred of sanity in the insane world of college...but more specifically...dorm life. Living here, to this point, has been fine. My roommates are great, the college experience thus far is amazing, and maybe the most important...the food is pretty good.

However, my reason to send this message to all of you is not concerned so much on the present and the future, but rather, the past couple of years of attending Open Prairie United Church of Christ. I have been meditating on the past three years of my life, and I realized that my church family has been a central focus and source of joy for two years of that short span of time and space. Many of you may or may not know this, I came from the Evangelical Covenant Church, where I grew and matured in an environment much different from Open Prairie. I felt trapped and cornered with the teachings and the attention of its leaders, members, and views. However, one Sunday way back in February a couple of years ago, I attended my first service with the "sinning church," as my church would say, and was impressed beyond words. The energy, the life, and the passion of the atmosphere spread like fire through the dried and depressed insides of my starving soul and left a layer of thin ash to fertilize the seeds of justice, peace, and most importantly, love, that would soon be planted in me and left to produce what would be me tonight as I write this letter, a firm believer in the ideals and the teachings of our church and more importantly, the wider national church.

The beliefs of equality, opportunity, and genuine care...which are yet still tiny plants within me...are your work my friends. Like the bed of a creek, the water of life starts to erode

away layers of deposits and waste, and eventually reveal the layers below. These unseen pieces in the stream reveal a history, a past that can be seen by what is left, but also helps what is to come, simply by opening our eyes to subtle things that are gently floating down the creek towards us. You have guided me towards this. I see what has happened behind me and will never forget it, but the exciting and most rewarding is the gift to look at the future, and know...hey, something is coming...something calls me to widen my expanding view of life even further to encompass more. The friends, family, and members of Open Prairie have instilled within me a tiny, seed, but the subtle act has taken my plant and nurtured it to become a growing plant, one who is not sure where he will grow or in what direction. You, my friends, are my sunshine, water, and whatever else one does to make a plant become a strong, independent, and ever growing and expanding work of God's love upon earth.

Through all of this, I can only say thank you. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to be part of this church family...which is an amazing and impressive group of people whom I have come to love and cherish as part of my life. Thank you for allowing me to expand the scope of my life...taking me to view higher heights and lower depths of the world around us. And most importantly to me, thank you for your small seeds that you have planted.

They are growing, and when they open to reveal their beautiful flowers, there will be six billion flowers of all colors, shapes, sizes, and beginnings but they all will have one thing in common...they are all just as important as the last, just like every one of you.

Best wishes and love,
Scott Roberts--The Penguin of Rockford College

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Hi Friends,

The Prairie Association of the Illinois Conference is really all of us together. So often we think of “the Association” as “those people” in the staff office. In truth, the Association is really just us, and the staff helps us.

In order to help our congregations claim their identity a change was made in our Constitution to put together a Ministry Team for Church Relations (MTCR). This ministry team seeks to fulfill a mission statement: “To build and strengthen the relationships and understanding between local churches and the Association.” As part of that Ministry Team I am initiating contact so that your congregation might have a person, with a name and a face, to represent the Association beyond the Association staff.

My name is Chuck Maney, Pastor Chuck, from the United Church of Christ in Spring Valley. I am a second career pastor. I have served in Spring Valley for the two years since I completed seminary. I was a member of First

Congregational in Ottawa since 1977, so I may know many of you from Association and Conference meetings over the years.

I would ask that you add our church to your mailing list and consider including us in your prayers. I would like to find an effective way of meeting some of the members and simply making acquaintances.

Thanks for your time. Please pass this note of introduction along, so that when I am able to come, you will have reason to be pleased and not threatened.

May the peace of God be with you and rest on you gently.

I have accepted an invitation to visit at your council meeting on September 27th. In a different but related note, I will be a part of the Support Team that was required by the grant from the national office of the UCC.

Chuck Maney, Spring Valley UCC