
PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Greetings Beloved Community,

Welcome back from what was hopefully an enjoyable summer. We have hit the ground running at Open Prairie this September, and I am excited to share with you some of the many upcoming events to which we are looking forward with great anticipation. First and foremost, let me extend a personal invitation to each of you to join us for our Fourth Anniversary Celebration Weekend on September 15 and 16. For that Sunday's worship service it will be our joy and privilege to welcome Rev. Dr. Dow Edgerton, Academic Dean of Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) and Rev. Dr. Jorge Morales, Associate Conference Minister of the Illinois Conference. Additionally, the OPUCC choir has been working hard on some very special music to add extra brightness to the event. So be sure to mark your calendar and join the Open Prairie family in marking this important milestone.

One of my great joys this fall is witnessing the development of two entering seminarians. Wendy Brown will enter her second year at CTS and Adam Webber will begin his first semester at The Earlham School of Theology as a long, long distance commuter. As some of you may know, Wendy has stepped up her role at OPUCC adding to her responsibilities care for the junior and senior youth programs. Additionally, Adam has agreed to step out from behind the piano to lead a twelve-week adult education series called "*The Heart of Christianity*".

"*The Heart of Christianity*" is a wonderful opportunity and ideal for those who are new to Christianity, still exploring faith development, newcomers to Open Prairie, as well as those who feel they would benefit from a review (and let's face it-who wouldn't?). Adam is a wonderful teacher whose gentle nature, combined with his dry wit will make this class a not to miss OPUCC experience. See Ami for more details.

Alongside Adam's twelve-week class, I will be leading two courses divided into five and seven week sections. The first class is in the tradition of many of our OPUCC small group circles. Each session will begin with an extended period of silent reflection followed by a short exercise in Lectio Divina (sitting with the word of God). Themes from a cross section of articles which have been assigned and read prior to the class gathering will be discussed and portions read aloud. This format provides a rich opportunity for plumbing the depths of our spiritual longing, and is a great way to become more deeply connected with each other.

The theme for the five-week session will be "Learning To Pray." In addition to the reading, each week will be accompanied by prayer exercises from a variety of traditions.

Sept. 18th: *Not Giving Up* by E. Glenn Hinson
 Sept. 25th: *A Journey of Formation* by Jan Johnson
 Oct. 2nd: *Bearing Our Burdens* by Elizabeth Green
 Oct. 9th: *Petition and Communion* by Percy C. Ainsworth
 Oct. 16th: *The Space of Prayer* by Maggie Ross

Books used in the course that may be of interest to the participants will be:
A Praying Congregation by Jane E. Vennard
50 Ways to Pray by Teresa A Blythe

The second class will be taught in a seven week series based on the new Joyce Rupp book entitled, *Your Sorrow Is My Sorrow: Hope and Strength in Times of Suffering*. This class will draw on Mary's journey through the birth and death of her son Jesus. As always, Joyce Rupp has an amazing capacity for connecting the stories of scripture with the stories of every day contemporary life. If you are grieving, have experienced a recent loss, or are in need of hope and strength, please consider committing to this series.

October 23rd: THE FORTELLING OF SORROW
The First Sorrow: The Prophecy of Simeon

October 30th: FLEEING FROM DESTRUCTION
The Second Sorrow: The Flight into Egypt

November 6th: SEARCHING FOR OUR LOST TREASURES

The Third Sorrow: The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple

(November 13th and 20th: There will be a two-week break from all classes)

November 27th: MEETING OUR PAIN

The Fourth Sorrow: Mary Meets Jesus Carrying His Cross

December 4th: STANDING BENEATH THE CROSS

The Fifth Sorrow: Mary Stands beneath the Cross of Jesus

December 11th: EMBRACING OUR LOSS

The Sixth Sorrow: Mary Receives the Dead Body of Jesus

December 18th: LAYING OUR SORROWS TO REST

The Seventh Sorrow: Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

There are brochures available, with more information about all of these classes and sign up sheets will be posted in the front office. **All classes will be on Tuesday nights from 7-9pm and everyone is encouraged to get involved.**

On behalf of the entire leadership team at Open Prairie, "WELCOME HOME."

Get involved, stay connected, and grow in faith!

With deep respect for our collective journey,

Rev. Curran Reichert

HELP WANTED!

Open Prairie is looking for volunteers to Chair and Co-Chair the Fellowship Committee.

The responsibilities of the committee include the following:

- providing refreshments after worship
- reaching out to ill members of OPUCC
- funeral luncheons
- birthday cards to members
- community service
- helping other OPUCC teams

This is a wonderful opportunity to get involved in Open Prairie and provide an essential service to the congregation.

Call Rev. Reichert for more information.

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept. 3		Labor Day
Sept. 5	8:00 am	Prayer Group @ Autrey's
Sept. 6	6:30 pm	Choir @ Autrey-Webber's
Sept. 7	6:00 pm	Holy Food event
Sept. 9	noon	Biloxi trip meeting
Sept. 9	6:00 pm	Youth group to Monical's
Sept. 12	8:00 am	Prayer Group @ Autrey's
Sept. 13	6:30 pm	Choir @ Autrey-Webber's
Sept. 15	5:30 pm	Apple Festival @ OPUCC
Sept. 16	10:30am	4 th Anniversary Celebration
Sept. 18	7:00 pm	Adult Ed. classes, week 1
Sept. 19	8:00 am	Prayer group @ Autrey's
Sept. 20	6:00 pm	Confirmation Class @ Goble's
Sept. 20	6:30 pm	Choir @ Autrey-Webber's
Sept. 22	7:30 pm	Coffee House
Sept. 23	noon	Church Council meeting
Sept. 23	1:00 pm	Crop Walk
Sept. 25	7:00 pm	Adult Ed. classes, week 2
Sept. 26	8:00 am	Prayer Group @ Autrey's
Sept. 27	6:30 pm	Choir @ Autrey-Webber's
Sept. 30	10:30 am	Jubilee Sunday



BACK BAY MISSION WORK TRIP

Back Bay Mission Work Trip to continue helping to rebuild the Hurricane Katrina ravaged areas of Biloxi, MS is scheduled for Sept. 30 - Oct. 6. There are a limited number of spots available. Please sign-up on the bulletin board in the lobby of the church or call Ami at the church office to reserve your space. We only have room for 2 more people so don't wait too long to get your name on that list! This will be Open Prairie's third work trip to help Hurricane Katrina victims.

Christian Education

NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS!

The 4th – 6th grade Sunday school class will begin on Sunday, Sept. 9th. Class will be held from 9:30 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. Wendy will be teaching this class.

Sunday school Teachers for Sept/Oct:

Sept. 2: Wendy
Sept. 9: Dawn
Sept. 16: Jana
Sept. 23: TBA
Sept. 30: Jubilee Sunday
Oct. 7: Wendy
Oct. 14: Jana
Oct. 21: Dawn
Oct. 28: TBA

- Confirmation is scheduled to begin Sept. 20th at 5:45 p.m. Please plan to meet at the church and we will walk to the Gobles for dinner. The purpose of the evening will be to begin discussions around what it means to live out your faith as older adults and to hear about Paul and Mary Jane's Faith Journey. The evening will conclude by 8:00 p.m.
- The Senior High Youth Group will meet Sept. 9th at 6:00 p.m. at Monical's Pizza. We will be planning all activities for the coming year. Bring a friend!
- The youth choir will begin singing every 3rd Sunday of the month beginning Sept. 16th.
- Biloxi Work trip meeting is scheduled for Sept. 9th immediately following worship. There are still two spots available if you haven't signed up yet it's not too late. Get your name on the list now!
- Medical Forms Update: All youth in the church must have an up to date medical form on file in the church office in order to participate in youth activities. These forms are good for one year at which point they need to be updated. If you have not received a new form from Wendy please pick one up in the church office. It would be great if all forms could be updated and returned no later than September 15th.
- Are you interested in Open Prairie activities that are aimed at folks in their 20s and 30s? Please contact the church office to be put on the special mailing list for this age group.

Just a reminder. We are continuing to recycle ink jet cartridges. All proceeds are used to help fund the younger youth going to camp. If you are unable to help by recycling I would encourage you to feel free to make a donation towards the cause as we try to assist each youth by awarding a \$50 scholarship per family.. If

you have any questions about how you can get involved in the camper scholarship program please talk with Wendy.

*Thanks to everyone who helps make the Christian Education program so successful!
~Wendy*

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity of LaSalle, Bureau & Putnam Counties is currently taking applications for two new homes to be built in the area. Applications are due at the end of October and Thrivent Foundation is helping with funding and labor. The Applicant who is chosen must meet income requirements and contribute 500 hours of labor toward the building of the home. If you know someone who would like to apply please call Habitat at 815-434-2041.

☺ HAPPY SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS! ☺

Sept. 1	Michelle Feigenbaum
Sept. 3	David Johnson
Sept. 3	Olivia Bettasso
Sept. 4	Dawn Nissen
Sept. 5	Ray Kuhnert
Sept. 6	Sara Hornbaker
Sept. 7	Karen Martin
Sept. 8	Fox Webber
Sept. 13	Hal Autrey
Sept. 16	Beth Bickerman
Sept. 17	Lark Fisher
Sept. 17	Tyler McCombs
Sept. 20	Jim Heider
Sept. 24	Molly Hornbaker
Sept. 24	Sallee Zearing
Sept. 25	Marilyn Calvert
Sept. 25	Donna Chelin

Note: if you have any additions or corrections, please let Ami know.

HEALTH MINISTRIES

The health ministries team has kept busy during the summer months. We have continued to take blood pressures the first Sunday of each month, made visits to folks in need, and provided the program for the slow food night in August. Michelle Feigenbaum

presented the program and did a great job.
Thank you Michelle.

We will begin meeting regularly again in September and will be reviewing the surveys that we handed out in the spring. Once we have looked over the surveys and identified the needs of the congregation we will begin planning an educational program. We will let you all know once we have decided on a date and the topic. We will also be periodically putting health tips in the newsletter.

Anyone in need of assistance from the health ministries team please let us know.

Peace, Mimi

Stewardship and Finance

Fall is the time of year when the church traditionally gears-up for the "Stewardship Drive". Perhaps it is the only time when the stewardship committee is active. However at Open Prairie we have chosen a different path. We have chosen to meet periodically throughout the year to discuss the financial future of Open Prairie as well as our current operating budget. We have chosen to explore other options of sharing our abundance and less reliance on new church grants. And we have chosen to believe that the stewardship team has a ministry: to spread the word that through financial giving, people will enjoy one of life's great privileges, enhance their spiritual lives, and grow in their faith.

Open Prairie will have the opportunity to share our abundance on **October 7th** for the ***Neighbors in Need*** special offering. The theme is "Jubilee". The scripture places particular significance on 50 year anniversaries. A 50th year is lifted up as a year of jubilee when justice is to be restored to all of God's people and to the land itself. The United Church of Christ celebrates its 50th year during 2007. This is our Jubilee year. Let us be agents of Jubilee Justice in our world! Remember your special offering to ***"Neighbors in Need"*** on **October 7th**.

Fellowship News

SLOW FOOD NIGHT

The third Slow Food night will be September 7 (yes, it's Homestead Weekend). We'll gather at 6 pm in the OPUCC kitchen, to make a simple meal--menu still being determined, but the focus will be on food and spirituality. Dinner will be served at approximately 7:30 pm--if you can't help prepare, but want to join us for dinner and clean-up, you are quite welcome! If enough people are interested, we'll play board games after dinner (bring your family favorites).

OPUCC 4th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

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**Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup>**

Open Prairie Apple Fest!  
5:30 p.m.

**Games! Dancing! Yummy food!**  
**\$5.00/person suggested donation**

A pot-luck dinner will be held with the meat and beverages provided. Members are asked to bring the following:

A – I Salads

J – R Side dishes

S – Z Desserts

**Be creative and try to include apples in your recipes!**



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Sunday, September 16th

The Rev. Dr. Dow Edgerton, Academic Dean at Chicago Theological Seminary will preach on Sunday, Sept. 16th. We will also have special guest Jorge Morales, Associate Conference Minister in the Illinois Conference worshipping with us.

Due to the high volume of positive responses to Margo's August newsletter article, I have asked and she has graciously agreed to submit monthly articles designed to appeal to the 20s-30s group. Margo is a cherished member of this community, even though she now lives several hours away, and I know we will all enjoy reading what she has to share.

Thanks Margo! Rev. Reichert

LIVING LEGACIES

When we were children adults often asked us, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" At the time, most of us had a quick, yet ever-changing answer: a firefighter, a doctor, an astronaut, a teacher, or an Olympic ski jumper (don't judge, I went through an Olympic stage). When we were young, all of these possibilities seemed like just that: possibilities. Nothing seemed off-limits because we did not adequately understand the constraints that often determine such pursuits. However, as we have grown, we have come to understand that our particular economic, educational, social, familial, physical, and psychological constraints will limit what we can do. And as we continue to age, time also becomes one of our greatest handicaps. Yet, that question faces me every time I recognize the fact that a person doesn't do the job I do for very long. There has to be a next step.

So, I have been thinking to myself, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" There are many paths I feel I could take, but figuring out what is my true "calling" has been difficult. I don't have a quick and ready-made answer anymore. It bothers me now that I have a different answer each time the question is asked. It seems that at this point in my life, after all these years, I should have an answer. I should be able to stick with something and make a choice that seems permanent. But, I guess that's just it. Part of growing up and maturing is not only realizing that we can't keep changing our minds, but also that any number of things can change the fate we choose.

This has led me to believe that it isn't the answers that are always wrong. Maybe it's the questions. Is it really important whether we choose the right vocation on the first, second, or third try? Is it some indication of our commitment or capability if we don't stay in the same type of job for more than ten, five, or even one year? When we die, will people remember us most because we stayed in an unhappy relationship "for the kids," or because we couldn't tell our parents that our true love is someone of the same sex or a different race? Or is it more important to have a positive impact on each

other and the world—regardless of what we do and who we love?

Maybe the answer is that all of these things are terribly important, and I just don't want to admit it. But right now, I feel like sticking my tongue out at a world that tells me I have to know what I want now and forever. Ultimately, I am the one who has to fly, sprint, trip, stumble, and grow through this life, so why shouldn't I be able to decide what the questions should be? Sure, others may still ask me what I am, or what I want to be. They may judge me for who I love, who I associate with, and what I believe. But these others are not responsible for my happiness, and many couldn't care less.

So, from now on I'll do the asking, and I'll choose my fate, determine my worth, and rate my success by my answer to this question: What do I want my legacy to be?

Maybe I don't know exactly what career(s) I will choose, or who I will spend my life with. But I do know that I will live my life to serve others. I will be a unifier. I will fight to break down the walls that separate us by showing others that it is our differences that spark love and understanding. I will be remembered as someone who smiled and reached out her hand. I will be remembered as someone who had an impact, even if on just one other person. I will effect change. I will be a total geek (in an obviously endearing way). I will make mistakes, but I will learn from them. And in the end, I will be someone who loved widely and loved well. To me, that is the greatest accomplishment any of us can aspire to, and the single most critical task God has set before us.

Peace, Margo Bertram

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**FOOD PANTRY FOR SEPTEMBER:**  
**Cereal**



Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower. ~Albert Camus

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### CHURCH CONTACTS

Church Office:  
25 E. Marion Street  
Princeton, IL 61356  
(815)872-5150  
mail@openprairie.org  
Office Open Tue./Thu. 9:00 – 5:00 pm

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

Church Web Site: [www.openprairie.org](http://www.openprairie.org)



Open Prairie UCC  
25 E. Marion Street  
Princeton, IL 61356