

**Prairie Circle UU Congregation**  
**October 25, 2009**  
**\*\* Religious Education Program News \*\***

**This Month in Children's RE – World Religions Program**

10/25 – Native American Spirituality  
11/01 – Native American Spirituality (Pre-Teen Group Meeting)  
11/08 – Baha'i Faith  
11/15 – Intergenerational Service Practice  
11/22 – Thanksgiving Intergenerational Service

For the next two weeks our classes will be studying Native American Spirituality and finding common links to our own UU faith, through music, crafts and discussion. We will be making our own tribal totem poles, talking about animal spirit guides and creating a communal sacred space.

**About Native American Spirituality:**

- Native American religion is primarily about experience not theology or doctrine
- It is simultaneously a personal and profoundly communal experience
- Ceremonies that are used to express spirituality are at their core a community experience (usually closed to outsiders) but the religious experience is profoundly shaped by one's membership, participation and involvement in the community and in particular one's life at a specific geographical location in relation to creation as a whole.
- Unlike religious traditions that see life on earth filled primarily with evil, toil and suffering, Native Spirituality perceives the world as deeply endowed with the sacred power of the Creator.
- Each living part of Creation, and especially the places important to each tribe or village, serves as but one entrance into the power of the sacred.
- These sacred sites mark the appropriate place for the enactment of certain ceremonies and religious activities. (Even native peoples who experienced removal from their indigenous homelands found sacred sites in places new to them where their religious traditions could be carried out)
- Most Native sacred sites are not analogous to a church or temples which are considered consecrated by humans. Native ceremonial sites are often located on the land where specific tribes have identified their spiritual center.
- Native faiths or teachings often refer to Creation itself as a complex web of life or a sacred circle in which all aspects of the natural world connect to each other.
- Humanity does not hold a privileged place above the rest of creation in native belief but is understood to be only a small part of creation.
- Many native faiths hold the belief that 'persons' other than humans inhabit the world including spirits are attributed with qualities of power and consciousness and openly acknowledge the existence of unseen powers. To recognize the earth as sacred is to also acknowledge all the 'members' of our many respective communities.
- The holistic nature of Native worldviews and spirituality gives a centrality to the idea of balance in one's life and in the world. Living in a good, healthy and beautiful way requires one to recognize that growth and success are achieved by integrating psychological, physical and spiritual well-being.
- Spiritual leaders and wisdom keepers do not undertake missionary activities. Their dependence on experience and on understanding the diversity of the circle of life makes it perfectly acceptable - perhaps to them inevitable - that people from different places will have different religions. This appreciation for cultural diversity of Mother Earth and her children explains the native respect for people's different ways of honoring the creator and creation.

This link can provide additional interesting information: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/nataspir1.htm>

## **Book Group begins new selection – November 8th**

### **Book Discussion: Barbara Ehrenreich - Bright sided The Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America**

Review by Emily Wilson, AlterNet. Posted October 10, 2009.

The author talks about how a plague of positive thinking is permeating our society, from medicine to business, and is even contributing to our financial crisis.

When Barbara Ehrenreich went to be treated for breast cancer, she was exhorted to think positively; and when she expressed feelings of fear and anger, she was chided for being negative. Ehrenreich, the author of 16 books, including *Nickel and Dimed* and *Bait and Switch*, which examine the blue- and white-collar job markets, took on what she sees as an epidemic of positive thinking in her new book: *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*.

Positive thinking is different, she says, from being cheerful or good-natured -- it's believing that the world is shaped by our wants and desires and that by focusing on the good, the bad ceases to exist. Ehrenreich believes this has permeated our culture and that the refusal to acknowledge that bad things could happen is in some way responsible for the current financial crisis.

In her new book, Ehrenreich examines how the positive-thinking movement was started by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, and an amateur metaphysician named Phineas Parkhurst Quimby in response to Calvinism; how being positive became mandatory in corporate culture; and how she thinks prosperity preachers, such as Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church in Houston encouraged a culture of debt by telling their congregations that God wants them to have a big house and a nice car.

Copies of the book can be found at local libraries, book stores. For more information or to order a book (\$14.00) contact Laura at 874-871-7049 or RE@PrairieCircleUUC.org

**Book group meets every *second* Sunday of the month  
at 10:45 in the charter school classroom  
located next to the courtyard behind the barn.**

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**Book Discussion Coming Soon: Karen Armstrong's *The Case for God***

Moving from the Paleolithic age to the present, Karen Armstrong details the great lengths to which humankind has gone in order to experience a sacred reality that it called by many names, such as God, Brahman, Nirvana, Allah, or Dao. Focusing especially on Christianity but including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Chinese spiritualities, Armstrong examines the diminished impulse toward religion in our own time, when a significant number of people either want nothing to do with God or question the efficacy of faith. Why has God become unbelievable? Why is it that atheists and theists alike now think and speak about God in a way that veers so profoundly from the thinking of our ancestors?

Answering these questions with the same depth of knowledge and profound insight that have marked all her acclaimed books, Armstrong makes clear how the changing face of the world has necessarily changed the importance of religion at both the societal and the individual level. And she makes a powerful, convincing argument for drawing on the insights of the past in order to build a faith that speaks to the needs of our dangerously polarized age. Yet she cautions us that religion was never supposed to provide answers that lie within the competence of human reason; that, she says, is the role of logos. The task of religion is "to help us live creatively, peacefully, and even joyously with realities for which there are no easy explanations." **If interested in joining this book discussion and/or ordering a book (\$16.00) please contact Laura at 874-871-7049 or RE@PrairieCircleUUC.org**