

Notes from the Prairie



PRAIRIE CIRCLE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

December 2011

Upcoming Services

All services are held at 9 a.m. unless otherwise noted. Sunday service topics may change without notice at the discretion of the speaker or because of other circumstances. We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

December 11th

Why Unitarians and Universalists Can and Should Celebrate Christmas

Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler

Come discover the unique religious meaning our 19th century Unitarian and Universalist ancestors gave to the Christmas celebration in America and how that perspective has become integral today to this religious celebration. After hearing this reflection, you will be able to answer the question your Christian friends ask: "How can you Unitarian Universalists celebrate Christmas when you're not even Christians?" Don't miss this service, for it could help make your Christmas meaningful in a new and different way. Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler will offer the reflection.

Tonia Becker VerShaw is the Service Leader. Our Director of Religious Education, Julie Palumbo, will offer the Story/Time for All Ages.

December 18th

Sacred Darkness – Why Should Our Discontent Be Inevitable?

Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler

With the increasing darkness that comes with winter, many people, at the very least, become gloomy and some even become depressed. Few people find anything positive about darkness, let alone find healing comfort in it. Just about everyone looks forward to the time when daylight

increases. This reflection will lift up the rich and deep healing comfort found in the promise within winter's quiet darkness.

Diana Fox is the Service Leader. Our Director of Religious Education, Julie Palumbo, will offer the Story/Time for All Ages. Our Choir, directed by Joyce DeWitt and accompanied by Jennifer Swartz, offers its melodious voices to enrich our experience of the service and there will be a special song sung by Mary Honegger.

December 25th

There will not be a Sunday service.

Everyone is invited instead to attend our special ***Christmas Eve Candlelight Service***. For more information about this service, see the following Special Holiday Services section.



Special Holiday Services

December 21st

A Contemporary, Contemplative Winter Solstice Celebration

Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler

Please note the location for this service has changed. It will now be held at the Barn.

This is a beautiful contemporary, contemplative service of readings, moments of silence, soloists, an interpretative dance, community drumming, community singing, meditation, a candle lighting ritual, etc., that

takes us on a journey from the quiet reverent darkness to a joyous celebration of returning light. This service will be offered by The Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler and members.

As space is limited, you're encouraged to come early. Please bring anything that can be used as a drum (an oatmeal box, coffee can, etc.) and a treat to share for the social hour following the service. Older children and youth are encouraged to attend.

This service will be held at the Barn and begins at 7:30 p.m. If you need a ride, please contact Rev. Ziegler, 847-629-5868.



December 24th – 4:30 p.m.
A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler

Please join us for this favorite seasonal celebration at the Barn. This service is offered through the unique perspective that Unitarian Universalism brings to this Christian holiday celebration. The Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler, along with other members, will present a service designed to delight the hearts of the young as well as the old. It will offer sacred and secular readings including the story of Jesus' birth from the Gospel of Luke, special Christmas stories and music and lots of carols to sing. We'll end with a special candlelight ceremony. The evening's Offering will be divided equally between PADS and the Avon Township Food Pantry.

At this the time of year, many people who ordinarily do not attend church want to attend a Christmas service where they could be theologically and/or philosophically comfortable. In some small way, they often want to relive the joys of their childhood

Christmas Eve services. I encourage you to do your friends a favor and invite them to attend our Christmas Eve service with you. Inviting them might make their Christmas all the more meaningful and memorable. Also, they might discover that they're a closet Unitarian Universalist and didn't know it.

Again, don't be shy; invite them to the service. The worst case scenario is they say "no thank you," but it's also possible they might say "thanks for asking me to come with you."

Rev. Ziegler's Thoughts and Jots and Whatnots



Greetings Good People,

It's happened again: the holiday season has arrived way too quickly and I am not ready for it. I think the Grinch stole my time! Well, maybe he didn't, but it sure feels like my time just disappeared! Even though it feels like it's disappeared, I know my time was well spent. I am very conscious that every moment was rich with life's joys or challenges and for that consciousness I am grateful! It just went by too fast.

Part I

Bill McKibben, an author, lay religious leader, social activist and an observer of contemporary culture, started a number of years ago a project called the "Hundred Dollar Holiday" and wrote a book by the same name. Basically, people who wish to participate in the "Hundred Dollar Holiday" simply limit their holiday spending to one hundred dollars **per family**. Originally intended as an environmentally-friendly reaction against the wastefulness of Christmas, the project has been embraced by many families as a pathway toward true abundance through simplicity.

With the US and global economies in such bad shape, I suspect many people are very stressed and concerned that they will not be able to provide family members with gifts, or

especially children with hoped-for items from their “wish lists.” Today, more than ever, McKibben’s message of limiting holiday spending can inspire us to give in creative ways that will both save us money while guiding us to share the true “gifts” of the season. For instance, below you will find excerpts from McKibben’s book to offer parents and grandparents examples of different gifts they could give this year.

Sometimes surviving difficult times can teach us other positive life lessons. I don’t wish to downplay the serious impact of this economic hard time. I only wish to offer a modicum of psychological and spiritual solace for those parents and grandparents who must cut back on the amount of presents and/or expensive gifts they can afford to give their children and grandchildren.

McKibben wrote:

Many Americans say they find the holidays stressful. It’s little wonder, since they have mainly come to mean endless trips to the mall, not to mention the ATM. Consider two parents who need a present for their daughter. Quite likely, they will drive to the shopping center, browse through a jewelry department, and come home with a gold chain or perhaps some earrings. Perfectly nice – but not nearly as nice as it could be.

What if, instead, Mom had looked through her jewelry box and found the necklace or the earrings she’d worn for her first grown-up New Year’s Eve celebration, then sat down and written a letter to her daughter, describing what the night had been like – what she’d worn, what songs had played, how she’d felt.

If she had done that, she wouldn’t have wasted money on jewels and gas or spent a couple of hours in the mall. But most important, she wouldn’t have wasted the memory of that night long ago, a memory that will ultimately mean more to her child

than any new bauble. She wouldn’t have lost an opportunity to really connect with her child, to remind her daughter that she too was once an adolescent and knows something of its glories and horrors. She wouldn’t have ignored that creative, letter-writing part of her soul, a part that most of us never utilize.”

McKibben continues: “Or consider grandparents living far away from their small grandchildren. They could drive downtown and buy a talking plush toy with enough silicon in its fluffy cranium to ‘respond’ to their grandkids after they’ve installed the batteries. Cool. But how much cooler if, instead, they went to their bookshelves and found a book they used to read to their grandkids’ dad or mom? The book might be dog-eared, its pages creased, but never mind. Delivered with an audiocassette of Grandma and Grandpa reading the book out loud, the gift would be a timeless treasure. “The grandparents would be the stars of bedtime for a month. And they wouldn’t have wasted the opportunity to plant their voices in the sleepy heads of their grandchildren. They wouldn’t have wasted a chance to show that they value reading or the opportunity to remind their grandchildren that they were parents once too.....Prohibited from wasting money on people, we found ourselves lavishing time on them instead.

These creative examples show us how we can lavish the special gifts of love and time, instead of money, on our children and grandchildren. And these examples don’t just apply to children – certainly there are creative ideas you could come up with for you spouse, parents, or siblings! Let me reinforce McKibben’s ideas by reiterating the four insights the authors of the book, “Unplug the Christmas Machine”, gleaned from their research about what makes the holiday season truly joyful for children. (They are excerpted from page 55 of the book.)

While most children are quick to tell their parents that what they want for Christmas are DVD games, . . . dolls . . . toys, and makeup kits, they have more fundamental needs than this. From talking with children, parents and child specialists, we've learned that in addition to a few well-chosen gifts, children really want and need four basic things for Christmas:

1. Relaxed and loving time with the family
2. Realistic expectations about gifts
3. An evenly paced holiday season
4. Strong family traditions

These four unspoken needs play the determining role in whether or not children have a good Christmas.

As you see, these highly respected authors did not find that lavishing children with many gifts was what made children have a good Christmas. They found it was time, connection and relationships that created a good Christmas time for children. It is certainly a lesson that holds true for adults as well.

Part II

I hope to see all of you at one or all of our December services, as well as our Winter Solstice and Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. However, since I know that won't be possible, I offer one of my favorite holiday aspirations, this 16th Century Christmas Wish:

There is nothing I can give you, which you have not got; but there is much, very much that, while I cannot give it, you can take. No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant. The gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within our reach, is joy. There is radiance and glory in the darkness, could we but see, and to see we have only to look . . .

Life is generous a giver, but we, judging its gifts by their coverings, cast them away as ugly, or heavy, or hard. Remove the covering and you will find beneath it a living splendor woven of love, by wisdom, with power. Welcome it, grasp it and you touch the Angel's hand that brings it to you. Everything you call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty, believe me, that Angel's hand is there; the gift is there and the wonder of an over-shadowing presence. Our joys, too; be not content with them as joys, they too conceal divine gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and of purpose, so full of beauty beneath its covering, that you will find that earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage then, to claim it, that is all. The courage you have, and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown countries, home.

And so, at this Christmas time, I greet you; not quite as the world sends greetings, but with profound esteem, and with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

~ A Christmas letter from Fra Giovanni to a Countess, 1513

Experience shows us all that the holiday season is one of joy and frustration, celebration and loneliness, a city's beauty and poverty, and nature's glory and piercing harshness. Amidst it all, I hope you will find moments of stillness and renewal resting upon you, granting you and your loved ones their healing grace.

Bright blessings,

Rev. Jackie



Our Caring Circle

During this past month Joys were expressed by: Bruce and Cathy Moon on the birth of their grand-daughter, Inge Crowley for her son-in-law's employment, Ellen (Diana Fox's sister) for the joy to be with us, Scott Helmke for his sister's employment.

Expressions of Gratitude: Tonia VerShaw Becker for volunteer efforts toward Stone Soup success, Ric Sarmont for teen workers, Jan Kirch thanking each member and friend who added their special ingredient to PCUUC's Stone Soup event especially to our teens who worked endlessly throughout the evening.

Concerns were expressed by: Scott Helmke for his sister's relocating due to a new job, Riley Achtemeier for her grandmother's health, Julie Palumbo for the victims of the Penn State incident, Doug DeWitt for his mother's health-related issues, Chris and Daye Kozlowski for the health of a neighbor and a friend both of whom are fighting cancer, Kent McKenzie for a co-worker diagnosed with cancer.

Family Concerns: Julie Palumbo for the health of her sister-in-law's father, great aunt, aunt and remembering her brother who passed away 16 years ago

Environmental Concerns were expressed by Rev. Jackie for the extinction of the Java Rhino and the fact that Earth has over seven billion humans, Rev. Jackie and Carol Niec for the proposed drilling of Oil/Tar Sands

Healing wishes are extended to: Joyce DeWitt's father who is recovering from a stroke, Penny Sue McKenzie's father

undergoing treatments, Rev. Jackie's husband recovering from a recent incident, and Jan Kirch recovering from sciatic complications.

Expressions of Sympathy were shared by Inge Crowley on the passing of a friend.

Milestone joys were shared by: Michael Blasius for his daughter's seventh birthday, Norine Fendrych celebrating Rich's birthday and Joyce DeWitt celebrating Rowan's & Kess's birthdays.

Let us each be filled with the joys and sorrows of our PCUUC family.

If you have a joy or concern to be published, contact the Caring Committee at: Caring@PrairieCircleUUC.org.

Coffee Cans, Oatmeal Boxes Needed

Rev. Ziegler and the Worship Committee are looking for empty coffee cans with lids, round oatmeal boxes with lids and anything else that can be used as a drum or a percussion instrument for the Winter Solstice service. Please bring your empty coffee cans with lids, round oatmeal boxes with lids, etc. to the December 11th and 18th services.

Shouts and Murmurs The Twelve Terrors of Christmas

by John Updike

The New Yorker, December 1992

Note: Below is a piece that I first heard while I was the intern with the First Unitarian Society of Madison, Wisconsin. The Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Michael Schuler, shared the piece at the 5 p.m. Christmas Eve service. I liked it and have shared it in the December newsletters of all of the congregations I've served. I haven't offered it in Christmas Eve services as I feel it's humor is a little too adult and dark for a service where children are likely to be

attending. I hope you enjoy it as much as many others have.

Cheers,
Rev. Ziegler

1. Santa the Man

Loose-fitting nylon beard, fake optical twinkle, cheap red suit, funny rummy smell when you sit on his lap. If he's such a big shot, why is he drawing unemployment for eleven months of the year? Something scary and off key about him, like one of those Stephen King clowns.

2. Santa the Concept

Why would anybody halfway normal want to live at the North Pole on a bunch of shifting ice floes? Or stay up all night flying around the sky distributing presents to children of doubtful deservingness? There is a point where altruism becomes sick. Or else a sinister cover-up for an international scam. A man of no plausible address, with no apparent source for his considerable wealth, comes down the chimney after midnight while decent, law-abiding citizens are snug in their beds — is this not, at the least, cause for alarm?

3. Santa's Helpers

Again, what is really going on? Why do these purported elves submit to sweatshop conditions in what must be one of the gloomiest climates in the world, unless they are getting something out of it at our expense? Underclass masochism one day, bloody rebellion the next. The rat-a-tat-tat of tiny hammers may be just the beginning.

4. O 'Tannenbaum

Suppose it topples over under its weight of explosive baubles? Suppose it harbors wood-borers that will migrate to the furniture? There is something ghastly about a tree — its look of many-limbed paralysis, its shaggy and conscienceless aplomb — encountered in the open, let alone in the living room. At night, you can hear it rustling and drinking water out of the bucket.

5. Tiny Reindeer

Hooves that cut through roof shingles like linoleum knives. Antlers like a hundred dead branches. Unstable flight pattern suggesting

"dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly." Fur possibly laden with disease-bearing ticks.

6. Electrocutation

It's not just the frayed strings of lights anymore, or the corroded transformer of the plucky little Lionel. It's all those battery packs, those electronic games, those built-in dictionaries, those robots asizzle with artificial intelligence. Even the tinsel tingles.

7. The Carols

They boom and chime from the vaulted ceilings of supermarkets and discount stores, and yet the spirits keep sinking. Have our hearts grown so terribly heavy since childhood? What has happened to us? Why don't they ever play our favorites? What were our favorites? Tum-de-tum-tum, angels on high, something something, sky.

8. The Specials

Was Charlie Brown's voice always so plaintive and grating? Did Bing Crosby always have that little potbelly, and walk with his toes out? Wasn't that Danny Kaye/Fred Astaire/Jimmy Stewart/Grinch a card? Is Vera-Ellen still alive? Isn't there something else on, like wrestling or "Easter Parade"?

9. Fear of Not Giving Enough

Leads to dizziness in shopping malls, foot fractures on speeded-up escalators, thumb and wrist sprain in the course of package manipulation, eye and facial injuries in carton-crowded buses, and fluttering sensations of disorientation and imminent impoverishment.

10. Fear of Not Receiving Enough

Leads to anxious scanning of U.P.S. deliveries and to identity crisis on Christmas morning, as the piles of rumpled wrapping paper and emptied boxes mount higher around every chair but your own. Three dull neckties and a pair of flannel-lined work gloves—is this really how they see you?

11. Fear of Returns

The embarrassments, the unseemly haggling. The lost receipts. Tired allegations of damaged goods. The humiliating descent into mercantilism's boiler room.

12. The Dark

How early it comes now! How creepy and green in the gills everybody looks, scrabbling along in drab winter wraps by the phosphorous light of department store windows fall of Styrofoam snow, mockups of a factitious 1890, and beige mannequins posed with a false jauntiness in plaid bathrobes. Is this Hell or just an upturn in consumer confidence?

Built Upon the Past: Family Holidays

Author Unknown

Note: Below is a piece that I discovered a number of years ago, too. As with John Updike's *Shouts and Murmurs*, I have shared it in the December newsletters of all of the congregations I've served. May it help soothe you and make it a little easier to gather with family members over the holidays.

With good wishes,
Rev. Ziegler

As the holidays approach, you may be preparing yourself to gather with family members you don't usually spend time visiting. You may even feel that you are choosing to meet more from a sense of obligation than celebration. But when we trust that the Universe always places us exactly where we need to be, we know that we have been placed in our families for some higher purpose. Your spirit may have chosen that particular group of souls to help you learn certain lessons, or to give you the experiences necessary to overcome specific challenges. And when we feel we've moved away from situations that don't resemble us or the life we choose to live, it can seem frustrating to put ourselves back into an old scenario. But even a sense of obligation is a sign that you are still connected to the energy of your family, and for that alone it is worth investing yourself into making the most of any gathering.

Once surrounded by people from your past, you may find that you are feeling

challenged by a sort of identity crisis. There is likely to be a gap between the person you know yourself to be now and how you are seen by those who knew you before. But you can call upon your inner strength to stand in your truth and simply be who you are without needing their approval or heeding any criticism. Then, you can offer them the gift you'd like to receive when you also allow them to be themselves.

Being in situations that we might not choose for ourselves allows us to see ourselves in a new light. The contrast helps us to see our own strengths and weaknesses, and to learn to accept others for theirs. Part of the magic of family is the way in which it bonds diverse people together, allowing them to function as a complete unit. Who we are today has been built upon our past. If nothing else, rejoining with the family and friends who knew us in our earlier days allows us to recall where we came from so that we can appreciate all that we've been given.

Minister's Holiday Schedule

Rev. Ziegler will be gone from December 26th through January 1st. She will check her home voice mail messages (**847-629-5868**). During this time away, she will return calls that are pastoral emergencies. If you have a pastoral emergency, please make sure you state that in your message. Rev. Ziegler will respond to all other calls when she returns.

Rev. Ziegler's Home- Office Hours

As a friendly reminder and a point of information, since Prairie Circle doesn't have a central office (yet) for me to use, I've set up a room in my home as my office space. You can call me directly at home, **847-629-5868**. However, the nature of ministry means I may be called away for meetings

and pastoral visits and thus not be in the "office" when you call. I am not saying this to dissuade you from calling. Just be aware that I might not always be there.

For the time being and as a "general" guideline, please call me between 8:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. Please know that you can also make an appointment to meet with me at a mutually convenient time.

If you call with a pastoral emergency and I do not answer, please leave a message stating your call is a pastoral emergency and I will call you back as soon as possible. Please try to remember to say your name and state slowly and clearly, two times, your contact number.



Board Approves "Change for the Future"

Upon the recommendation of Rev. Ziegler, and followed by a discussion at its November 2011 meeting, the Board voted unanimously to offer a simple way for PCUUC to do more community outreach. They voted to institute a simple and successful program called "Change for the Future."

This highly successful program is used nationwide by many other Unitarian Universalist congregations. The idea is that at every Sunday service people are invited to put their pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters into the offering baskets. Then at the end of each month, all of the coins collected during that month are totaled up and donated in the Congregation's name to a local, nonprofit agency.

"Change for the Future" will begin with our January 8th, 2012, service and thereafter will continue every Sunday. To begin the

program, the Board asked PCUUC's Social Action Committee to select for January a nonprofit agency that the coins collected would go to. However, during January 2012 PCUUC members and friends will have the opportunity to nominate other local nonprofit agencies to be recipients for all of the other months.

So, look under and between the couch cushions, in your pant pockets or purse, in the ashtray of your car, or wherever you stash your coins and, starting with the January 8th, 2012, service, plan to bring them every Sunday. In this small yet very effective way, PCUUC will help these organizations defray some of the costs associated with offering their services and thus together help make a difference in the quality of life in the larger community.

To Be or Not to Be? What Will the Future Bring?

A Workshop to Facilitate Prairie Circle's Future and Growth

On Saturday, January 14th, Rev. Ziegler will facilitate a workshop focused around a short book called, *The Almost Church Revitalized: Envisioning the Future of Unitarian Universalism*. It is written by Michael Durall, the highly respected Unitarian Universalist and consultant for the prestigious Alban Institute. It offers an overview of the current state of Unitarian Universalism in the nation and why UUism is not growing and it provides an important definition of leadership and the responsibilities of leaders in a congregation. However, as the author encouragingly states, "This book contains scores of ideas that will help UU congregations become more influential in their communities and more effective in achieving their hopes and dreams."

During the workshop, Rev. Ziegler will lead participants in brainstorming exercises that will identify and then develop a few concrete activities and/or programs to help the Congregation live out and experience its hopes and dreams about what it means,

from a justice perspective, to be Unitarian Universalists.

This workshop will be open only to members and friends who have read the book. Your Board has already read it and is making copies available for members to sign out for reading. Board Member Chris Kozlowski will have copies available on Sundays.



Invitation to a Christmas Day Brunch

Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation's members and friends are invited to an informal potluck brunch beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Christmas Day at the home of Marty and Tonia VerShaw, 18008 W. Winnebago Drive in Wildwood. They ask you to bring your favorite morning brunch food. They will have the coffee ready! Bring your holiday memories or thoughts to share with UU friends.

A sign-up sheet with directions to their home will be available during Sunday morning coffee hour in December. Call Tonia if you have questions at 630-359-7295 or e-mail at tvershaw@gmail.com.

Giving Tree Kick-Off, December 4th!

This year the Social Action Committee has decided to use a "Giving Tree" to raise money for PADS and the Avon Township Food Pantry. The needs of these community services changes with their population and, because of this, they find

donations of funds or general gift cards more useful than specific items. This way of giving allows these organizations to purchase what they need when they need it.

Each time a donation is made you are welcome to fill out an ornament with your own name, or in honor of another, then place the ornament on the Giving Tree. If you choose to give a gift card, feel free to take advantage of gift cards available from Prairie Pennies. Walgreens and Jewel-Osco cards are available almost every Sunday and would meet many needs.

Thank you all for what you do and give. Happy Holidays to everyone.



Coming in March 2012: Honoring Women Who Made or are Making a Difference in Our Lives -- A March Dinner Party Celebration

All women, men and older children are invited to participate in an exciting activity, which will be a part of Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation's celebration of Women's History Month in March 2012.

The plan is for each person to create a dinner plate and/or setting honoring a woman of his or her choice, whether deceased or living, who has made a difference in his or her personal life (wife, partner, mother, sister, daughter, grandmother, aunt, friend or in the larger

world). All of the place settings will be used to set a beautiful table and a dinner party will be held to celebrate the women for whom the plates were created

The plate-making activity and culminating party are based on the famous larger-than-life installation artwork called The Dinner Party which the feminist artist Judy Chicago created in collaboration with other women.

Rev. Ziegler and Dayle Kozlowski are offering this event. If you have any questions, feel free to contact either one of them. You can reach Dayle at 847-477-3828 or daylerkozlowski@yahoo.com and Rev. Ziegler at 847-629-5868 or revziegler@comcast.net. Watch for more information in future newsletters.

For more information about The Dinner Party, a phenomenal art piece that elevates women's achievement in Western history to a heroic scale traditionally reserved for men, go to:

www.brooklynmuseum.org/easca/dinner_party

Some Upcoming Events - Looking Ahead in 2012

Sunday, January 1:

There will be a Sunday service at 9 a.m. at the Barn. Chris Kozlowski and Donna Marshall will facilitate this service which will possibly include the Fire Communion.

Sunday, January 15: What Does Your Heart and Mind Long For?

After the service, at approximately 10:45 a.m., Rev. Ziegler invites you to share sermon topics that you'd like her to consider offering.

Friday - Sunday, February 3 -5: 2012 Winter Women Spirit Conference

This conference is sponsored by Central Midwest District Woman and Religion Committee and will be held at the Rockford, Illinois, UU Church. Rev. Ziegler and Dayle Kozlowski are offering a workshop. Keynote Speaker is the world-renowned Kirtan singer Rgani.

Sunday, February 12: "A Recommitment to Vows of Love" (Tentative)

Before the service, this simple yet eloquent, beautiful ceremony will be offered to all couples, straight or gay, who want to reaffirm their marriage or union vows.

February or March 2012: Intergenerational "Lord of the Rings" Costume Party – Tentative

President's Message



Journeys offer interesting dynamics. Enjoying the journey, coupled with accepting patience for where you are on the journey, married with an impatience that drives you forward, are all necessary. The patience-impatience balance is what always intrigues me. From the perspective of President of the PCUUC Board, it feels like we are striking a pretty good balance in this area.

- On November 5th, we held a conflict management workshop hosted by Rev. Georgette Wonders. Area UU churches were invited to attend, but only PCUUC members attended allowing us to focus on our unique challenges and opportunities. I believe that the workshop was a success in offering some framework for past conflict challenges within PCUUC and most importantly offered some ways of thinking about and managing future sources of disagreement within the congregation. The thought that kept running through my mind both during and after the workshop was that we are in an ongoing and never ending "practice" of community.

Productive practice requires an acute awareness of what was/is successful, what was/is not successful and making appropriate adjustments. I will be publishing a blog post shortly that will offer a greater expansion of these thoughts.

- We have begun more frequent communications with the community regarding the January 14th, 2012 workshop that Rev. Jackie Ziegler will be conducting discussing the book “The Almost Church Revitalized: Envisioning the Future of Unitarian Universalism” by Michael Durall. The full PCUUC community is invited to read this book, then to participate in the workshop on January 14th, 2012 from noon to 5:00 p.m. Approximately 15 copies of the book were purchased to be shared within the community. If you are interested in borrowing one of the PCUUC copies, please see Chris Kozlowski. There seems to be a lot of interest in this book and in this workshop within the community which is fantastic!
- At Rev. Jackie's suggestion, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the “Change for the Future” and per Rev. Ziegler's article within this newsletter, we will be working with the Social Action Committee to orchestrate with the community to select organizations to receive the collected funds. Stay tuned for more.
- In February 2012, we will be holding a community discussion so that we may share thoughts and ideas with one another. More information on the specific date will follow shortly.
- The Board voted to form an ad hoc committee to explore possibilities for meeting and, possibly, worship space. The Board will begin forming this committee, so if you are interested, please e-mail me at

President@PrairieCircleUUC.org.

We plan to give the committee some framework and direction for their exploration after the January 14th “Almost Church Revitalized” workshop. The committee will have some information and ideas to share with the community (if anything worth sharing materializes, of course) no later than the June Annual Meeting, but hopefully before that. Given the pressures we experience by not having more permanent space of our own and the glut of unoccupied real estate, we thought it might be a good time to put out some feelers without spending too much time as a community if the path seems not feasible.

This is a summary of the larger initiatives we are currently undertaking as a Board. Please never hesitate to get in touch with me or another Board member with comments and suggestions. Have a wonderful week.

In Faith,
Tonia Becker VerShaw
PCUUC Board President
President@PrairieCircleUUC.org

Caring and Worship Committees Seek Your Feedback

The Caring and Worship Committees have been discussing the possibility of a series of sermons and discussions centering around End of Life planning. Kindly use the link below to complete this short survey by December 18th. The results will inform us as to whether to move ahead on this and, if so, what the greatest areas of interest are. Results will be shared with membership early in 2012.

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/657024/End-of-Life-Planning-Survey>

Adult Enrichment Program



BYOT: Building Your Own Theology

What do Unitarian Universalists believe? A creedless church offers no ready-made answers to this question. This popular class, led by Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler, provides tools for building a personal theology based upon the material of one's own life experience. Its purpose is to help us understand, develop and articulate our own spiritual values and meanings, and to place them within a larger context of religious, spiritual and philosophical thought. This class is highly recommended for those new to Unitarian Universalism or to those thinking about joining us, but it is also helpful to thoughtful people at various stages in their life journeys. In fact, some have enjoyed taking it more than once over the years!

The six sessions will deal the following tentative topics:

- Preliminary Considerations – Spirituality and Religion
- A Unitarian Universalist Theological Model
- A Spiritual Autobiography – Your Own
- Religious Viewpoints: Staking Out a Position on God
- Jesus, Hitler, and Human Nature
- Credo (“I believe...”) and Closure

The class consists of presentations by Rev. Jackie, sharing of personal views in groups, large group discussions, reading assignments, and the writing and sharing of one's “Credo” (“I believe” statement). There are refreshments and a social time following each class for those who wish to linger.

Please note that there are readings and other homework assignments each week, so a serious commitment of time is required. Please consider this before signing up. This popular class often fills up quickly, so sign up now!

- Facilitator: Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler
- Dates: 4 Tuesday sessions + 2 Thursday sessions:
 - Tuesdays - January 10, 17, 24 and 31 and
 - Thursdays, February 9 and 16
- Time: 6:45 p.m. Gathering/7 p.m. Start
- Location: Rev. Ziegler's home, 25934 W. Laneville Rd., Ingleside, 60041
- Cost: \$30 members; \$45 non-members
- Deadline: January 3rd (if class is not filled earlier)

Registration: Class is limited to 10 people. Your registration must be secured by payment of class fee; otherwise you may end up on the waiting list. Drop it off at the Religious Education Table during Coffee Hour or mail your check to Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler, 25934 W. Laneville Lane, Ingleside, IL. 60041. Make your check payable to PCUUC **and** note “BYOT” in the memo section. If you would like to receive a confidential scholarship, please talk to Rev. Ziegler.

Presentation of the Film “Food, Inc.”

The Adult Enrichment Committee is pleased to announce a showing of Robert Kenner's documentary film “Food, Inc.”. The press notes describe the film:

In “Food, Inc.”, filmmaker Robert Kenner lifts the veil on our nation's food industry, exposing the highly mechanized underbelly that's been hidden from the American consumer with the consent of our government's regulatory agencies, USDA and FDA. Our nation's food supply is now controlled by a handful of corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health, the livelihood of the American farmer, the safety of workers and our own environment. We have

bigger-breasted chickens, the perfect pork chop, insecticide-resistant soybean seeds, even tomatoes that won't go bad, but we also have new strains of e coli --the harmful bacteria that cause illness for an estimated 73,000 Americans annually. We are riddled with widespread obesity, particularly among children, and an epidemic level of diabetes among adults.

Featuring interviews with such experts as Eric Schlosser (Fast Food Nation), Michael Pollan (The Omnivore's Dilemma) along with forward thinking social entrepreneurs like Stonyfield Farms' Gary Hirschberg and Polyface Farms' Joe Salatin, Food, Inc. reveals surprising, and often shocking, truths about what we eat, how it's produced, who we have become as a nation and where we are going from here.

The film will be presented after the Sunday service at 10:45 a.m. on December 18th in a Prairie Crossing Charter School classroom next to the Byron Colby Barn. A discussion period will follow.

If you are interested in attending the film, or if you would like to suggest a film to be considered for screening at a future Movie Club event, please contact Rev. Ziegler, Duane Shaneyfelt or Mike Honegger. Or, you can email your intent to attend or a suggestion to:
Adult-RE@PrairieCircleUUC.org.

Reel to Real and a Meal Evening Discussions with Rev. Ziegler

As part of the Winter 2012 Adult Enrichment Religious Education program offering, Rev. Ziegler is offering another evening gathering of members and friends to philosophical and theological implications of a designated secular movie, all while sharing a potluck dinner.

Rev. Ziegler will facilitate the discussion through open-ended questions and comments. In order to participate in this evening of exciting, thoughtful discussion and delicious food, you should meet the following two requirements:

- you must have seen the chosen movie no more than 4 weeks before the

evening gathering so its themes are fresh in your mind

- you must reserve one of the ten places at the table through Rev. Ziegler

The second gathering will be Friday, January 13th, with the potluck dinner beginning at 6:30 p.m. We will discuss the 2011 movie, "The Tree of Life". It was designated as a Critics' Pick by the film reviewers of "The New York Times". This movie is available now through Netflix and various on-line sources and maybe from your local library.

To reserve a place at the dinner table email Rev. Ziegler at revziegler@comcast.net or call her at 847-629-5868. As space is limited, reservations will be limited to the first 10 people who contact her.

The **deadline** for reserving a spot at the table is Monday, January 9th. Rev. Ziegler will call you to confirm your place and discuss your potluck contribution.

Social Action News

Welcoming a Guest at Your Table

Each year at this time, friends and families in our congregation participate in Guest at Your Table — a UU tradition for decades. By bringing home a Guest at Your Table box and a Stories of Hope booklet, families and individuals learn about how the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee puts our shared values into action in the United States and around the world. Through a potent combination of advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots human-rights leaders, UUSC promotes economic rights, advances environmental justice, defends civil liberties, and preserves the rights of people in times of humanitarian crisis.

Through the Stories of Hope booklet, we connect with people throughout the world who have shared their personal struggles and are working hard for human rights in partnership with UUSC. In each household, the Guest at Your Table box is placed in a prominent spot, often at the family dinner

table. When family and friends gather to enjoy their blessings, they can reflect on the contributions of their "guests" to the movement for universal human rights — and share generously. Each week, we can choose a different story to read, bringing our guests to life and helping celebrate our own rights.

Sharing our blessings through Guest at Your Table ensures that UUSC's human-rights work continues. Please consider making a contribution that meets membership levels. Since UUSC is an independent organization that receives no funding from government or the UUA, your support and membership are vitally important.

Guest Boxes or, if you prefer, envelopes are available at each service in December. You may also support UUSC directly online at uusc.org/givetoguest. The 2011 program will conclude on January 1st. Donations will be accepted at the Barn through January 15th.

Update on Prairie Pennies

Through November 30th, we have made \$478 on the Prairie Pennies scrip card program. Thanks to everyone who has purchased scrip cards this year.

Update on Social Action Sunday Giving

Through October 31st, we have donated \$703 to the Avon Township Food Pantry and PADS through our Social Action Sunday collection. In addition, we will donate 10% of the proceeds from the Stone Soup Auction (about \$1,100) to ATFP and PADS.

Battery, CFL Bulb and Inkjet Cartridge Recycling

Household batteries, (AAA, AA, C, D, 9V, rechargeable and small disc batteries), compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and inkjet cartridges are harmful to our environment when disposed of improperly. We can work together to protect our environment by keeping these toxic items out of the landfills. PCUUC has a recycling box located on the table near the entrance. Just bring in your depleted batteries, CFL bulbs and inkjet cartridges to

church on any Sunday, drop them in the box and you can be assured they will be properly disposed of.

Nearby locations that provide additional opportunities to properly recycle other toxic household items such as car batteries, automotive fluids, used tires, household electronics, computer components and accessories can be found by visiting:

<http://search.earth911.com/>

and entering your zip code in the search box.

Covenant Groups

A covenant group is a small group that meets to discuss topics of interest and develop bonds of friendship. Interested in starting a new covenant group? Contact the Director of Religious Education, Julie Palumbo, for more details:

re@PrairieCircleUUC.org.

Men's Group

The Men's Group meets on select Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Check the website calendar for updates:

www.prairiecircleuuc.org/news-events/calendar/

The location rotates among member's homes and topics are varied. New members are always welcome. Contact Rich Fendrych if you have any questions:

membership@PrairieCircleUUC.org.

Monday Night Prairie Women's Covenant Group

The PCUUC Prairie Women's group meets once a month from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Check the website calendar for updates on this month's meeting:

www.prairiecircleuuc.org/news-events/calendar/

The location rotates among member's homes and topics are varied. New members are always welcome. For more information, contact Norine Fendrych at nativeheart27@scglobal.net or Sally Merritt at merritt69_99@yahoo.com.

Our Wider Community



Soup and Song House Concert to Benefit Therapeutic Arts program in Africa

You are invited to the home of PCUUC members Cathy and Bruce Moon on Saturday, December 10th, for a house concert to benefit Global Alliance for Africa's Therapeutic Arts Program for children in East Africa orphaned or otherwise made vulnerable by the AIDS pandemic. The concert features over a dozen musicians, including some PCUUC members, playing solo and in groups. The event is lots of fun -- and for a good cause too!

Admission is \$15 for adults, \$10 for students, and children 12 and under are free. African artwork, jewelry and other items will also be for sale. Vegetarian and meat soups will be provided; please BYOB and also bring a side dish or dessert to share.

Saturday, December 10th, 6-10 p.m.
305 Dunbar Rd., Mundelein, 847-566-4732

Who Would Be at Your Table? The Dinner Party Then and Now!

A Workshop Offered by Rev. Jacqueline Ziegler and Dayle Kozlowski for the 2012 Winter Women Spirit Conference

All women and girls are invited to attend the Central Midwest District Woman and Religion Committee's 2012 Winter Women

Spirit Conference. It will be held February 3rd – 5th at the Rockford UU Church. The Friday evening keynote speaker is world-renowned Kirtan singer ((Kirtan is a Hindu heart meditation technique), Ragani. A variety of workshops will be offered during the day on Saturday.

This workshop is based on the famous larger-than-life installation piece called *The Dinner Party*. The feminist artist Judy Chicago created it in collaboration with other women. First exhibited in 1979, *The Dinner Party* is a monumental example of a collective feminine yearning to write women back into history and end the ongoing cycle of omission in which women were written out of the historical record.

This iconic feminist artwork represents 1,038 women in history — 39 women are represented by place settings and another 999 names are inscribed in the Heritage Floor on which the table rests. The installation is comprised of a triangular table divided into three wings, each 48 feet long.

Rev. Jacqueline Zeigler and Dayle Kozlowski will reflect on the creation and importance of *The Dinner Party* and explore its impact then and now. Who would *you* include at your Dinner Party? Bring the spirit of the woman or women you would set places for at the Dinner Party.

Registration information will be made available in future newsletters.

Holiday Shopping at the UUA Bookstore

There are many great reasons to shop at the UUA Bookstore. When you buy from the UUA Bookstore, you are supporting your denomination and the important work we do. When you shop with us, you'll find an inventory specially selected for Unitarian

Universalists and a knowledgeable staff committed to great customer service.

And now you can save money when you shop with us! Until December 9th, we are offering free standard shipping* on all U.S. orders placed either online or over the phone.

Through Friday, December 16th, we'll offer daily deals each weekday, slashing 20% to 50% off the price of selected products including books, jewelry, posters and more! Like us on Facebook or check the UUA Bookstore front page each weekday for that day's deal and discount code. We've also added a Bargain Items category, where you can get last-chance deals on great products. Get them quick, though - the deals are only good while supplies last!

*Free shipping must ship to U.S. addresses only, excludes expedited shipping. Call or see website for details:
<http://www.uuabookstore.org/>

NSUC Concert Series

The Phouri Trio will present the second program in the 2011-12 NSUC Concert Series on Sunday, December 11th at 1:30 p.m. Pianist Yasuko Oura will be joined by two of Eighth Blackbird's Grammy-winning players, clarinetist Michael Maccaferri and cellist Nicholas Photinas in a program of music by Johannes Brahms, Claude Debussy and Max Bruch. There is no admission charge but donations are requested.

Jazz at the Unitarian Church of Evanston

The Unitarian Church of Evanston presents legendary jazz pianist, Junior Mance, Evanston native, in performance on Saturday, January 14th at 7 p.m. This will

be a great evening of music at UCE. Tickets are available at:
www.ucevanston.org
or at (847) 864-1330.



Meet Up, Get to Know and Party with Other UUs

The Board and Rev. Ziegler invites and encourages members to submit their names to be one of the Congregation's representatives to the Unitarian Universalist Central Midwest District's (CMwD) 2012 Annual Assembly. By being a representative for the Congregation, you'll get to experience the joy and power of meeting other Unitarian Universalists from across the CMwD and at the same time learn more about UU ways. The 2012 CMwD's meeting is being held in the Chicagoland area at the Marriott Oak Brook Hill Resort April 27th – 29th.

Friday night's opening ceremony will feature special guest Rev. Bill Schulz, past President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA) and currently the President of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. The Rev. Marilyn Sewell will be the keynote presenter on Saturday morning. She is very excited about exploring leadership from a theological perspective.

There will be two sessions of workshops on Saturday afternoon and then, in the evening, there will be a showing of the raved-about documentary **Raw Faith** which is about Rev. Sewell's life as a Unitarian Universalist minister and about Unitarian Universalism.

Chris and Dayle Kozlowski attended a previous CMwD Annual Meeting and can share with you the fun they had.

Final Notes

Newsletter Submissions

All submissions for the January 2012 newsletter are due by the end of the day on **December 25th**. The newsletter will be posted on the website at the beginning of December. Please send submissions as attachments to Andrea Mills, PCUUC's Church Administrator at: office@PrairieCircleUUC.org.



To Discontinue Receiving Monthly Email Notices of the Publication of the Newsletter:

Please send your request to the Office Administrator at office@PrairieCircleUUC.org and include your name and email address in your request. Thanks.



Visit PCUUC on the Internet at
<http://www.prairiecircleuuc.org>

List of PCUUC Contacts

Reverend Jacqueline Ziegler	Developmental Minister	minister@prairiecircleuuc.org or revjackie@comcast.net
Tonia Becker VerShaw	Board President	President@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Kent McKenzie	President Elect	VP@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Donna Marshall	Secretary	Secretary@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Chris Kozlowski	Treasurer	Treasurer@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Kadi Petridis	Trustee	Trustee@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Scott Helmke	Trustee	Trustee@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Andrea Mills	Church Administrator	Office@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Julie Palumbo	Director of Religious Education	RE@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Joyce DeWitt	Choir Director	Choir@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Mark Wilson, Jim Cubit & Scott Helmke	Music Team	Music@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Diana Fox	Worship Committee	Worship@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Laura Franz	Children's RE Committee	RE-Committee@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Mike Honegger	Adult Enrichment Committee	Adult-RE@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Norine Fendrych	Social Action Committee	Socialaction@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Rich Fendrych	Membership/Publicity Committee	Membership@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Ric Sarmont	Long Range Planning Committee	Planning@PrairieCircleUUC.org
TBD	Nominating Committee	Nominating@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Teresa Aguinaldo	Hospitality Committee	Social_events@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Jan Kirch	Caring Committee	Caring@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Steve King	Human Resources Committee	
TBD	Fundraising Committee	Fundraising@PrairieCircleUUC.org
Rich Fendrych	Webmaster	Webmaster@PrairieCircleUUC.org