



Prairie Fire

July 18, 2009

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The full-featured **Prairie Fire** is published on the 22nd of every month. The **Prairie Fire Bulletin** is a calendar-only newsletter that is published on the 6th of every month. Both are published by Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. View past issues at www.uuprairie.org

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Calendar

Sunday, July 19, 2009

9:00 am - RE Committee meeting
10:00 am - service - "When Breathing is Defiance: Stories from Occupied Palestine," presented by Sol Thea Kelley-Jones and Nathan Beck.
11:45 am - Prairie Book Club meets to discuss The Sewing Circles of Herat by Christina Lamb.

Saturday, July 25, 2009

9:00am - 2:00pm - Prairie Work Day: volunteers needed to paint Prairie's basement.

Sunday, July 26, 2009

10:15 am - Joint UU Service at Sauk City - "Simplicity."
7:00 pm - Social Action Committee presents the play, *Seven Jewish Children*.

Tuesday, July 28, 2009

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meet. Topic is "A crisis in your life and how you handled it."

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

7:00 pm - Archiving Meeting at Prairie.

Saturday, August 1, 2009

9:00 am - Prairie WOW meets for breakfast potluck.

Sunday, August 2, 2009

10:00 am - service - "The Omnivore's Dilemma," the all-Prairie Book Read service, presented by Heidi Hughes and Mary Mullen.
11:30 am - All Society Potluck.
12:30 pm - Humanist Union meets.

Thursday, August 6, 2009

6:30 pm - Spanish Speaker's Potluck at the home of Ray Nashold.

Saturday, August 8, 2009

5:00 pm - Prairie UU Potluck and Party for the Herr-Hoymann Family, Wingra Park.

Sunday, August 9, 2009

10:00 am - service - "A Passage to India," presented by Madeline and Reuben Arnold.
11:30 am - Board Meeting. Potluck at 11:30, meeting begins at noon.

Sunday, August 16, 2009

10:00 am - service - "UU General Assembly 2009," presented by Rachel Long and Ingrid West.

Wednesday, August 19, 2009

7:00 pm - Caring committee meets.

Thursday, August 20, 2009

7:00 pm - Movie Group meets to view "The Cats of Mirikatani."

Upcoming Sunday Programs

Sunday, July 19, 2009, 10:00 am "When Breathing is Defiance: Stories from Occupied Palestine," presented by Sol Thea Kelley-Jones and Nathan Beck. In Cairo, Egypt, President Obama stated that "America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties, and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied." Obama further stated "that it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people - Muslims and Christians - have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than sixty years they endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead. So let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own." He said that "the only resolution is for both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security." The program's speakers will report on what is going on now in Palestine, followed by a discussion of how a two state solution could be achieved.

Prairie Web Sites:

Society Home Page
www.uuprairie.org

News Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_news/

Views
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_views/

Social Action
<http://socialaction.madisonwi.us>

Humanist Union
<http://humanist.madisonwi.us>

Input Deadlines:

Calendar items and program descriptions are due on the 1st and 15th of each month. Feature articles for the full *Prairie Fire* are due on the 15th of each month. Please send to Kate Liu at admin@uuprairie.org or call 271-8218.

Sunday, July 26, 2009 10:15 am - "Simplicity." Today the Free Congregation of Sauk County will welcome the three Madison area UU congregations to Park Hall in Sauk City for a joint program on the theme of "Simplicity," followed by a picnic potluck in the surrounding park. Andrew Kerr, Speaker of the Free Congregation, will offer a welcome and a short Reflection. Jack Holzhueter will be the resident musician. The doors will be open at 9:30 a.m., the program will begin at 10:15, and the picnic potluck will commence at approximately 11:45. This year marks the 125th anniversary of Park Hall, built in 1884.

Sunday, July 26, 2009, 7:00 pm - "Seven Jewish Children," a play presented by the Social Action Committee. As a follow up to the July 19th service on Palestine, the Social Action Committee of Prairie presents the play SEVEN JEWISH CHILDREN, written by Caryl Churchill, Sunday evening, 7 pm at Prairie on July 26. The play is about children, not for children, as it is a serious play about children exposed to war. There are no children in the play. It will be performed by members of the Social Action Committee, Steve Blank, Nancy Graham, Dave Johnson, Marcia Johnson, Barb Park, Andy Somers and Mary Somers, and directed by Andy Somers. Bob Park, another member of the committee, will be recording the play for CityWIDE Radio. A discussion open to the audience will follow the play. There is no admission fee but a collection will be taken with all proceeds to Medical Aid for Palestinians (<http://www.map-uk.org/>).

Sunday, August 2, 2009, 2009 "The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals," the all-Prairie book read service, presented by Heidi Hughes and Mary Mullen. Every four years, the Congregational Study/Action Committee of the UUA asks all UU's from around the nation to focus on a particular topic. For the years 2008-2012 the focus is "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice." This book was recommended to help introduce and educate us about this topic. The author, Michael Pollan, is no food scientist, botanist, agricultural specialist or the like, but a writer/journalist who became interested in this topic while writing about food for the New York Times Magazine. It is clear that he has a very personal interest in investigating where the food on his plate is coming from. He has done extensive research and fact finding about industrialized food, organic farming and foraging for his own meal. It seems he has become the voice of sustainable/ethical eating for the nation due to his passion for this subject. Come all! to a lively discussion of this book that will definitely get you thinking about what you are eating and why it is important! Even if you don't get a chance to crack the cover, this topic is fascinating and timely and will interest most anyone.

Sunday, August 9, 2009 10:00am - "A Passage to India," presented by Reuben and Madeline Arnold. Madeline and Reuben Arnold will be sharing their experiences volunteering for the month of July at the Don Bosco Mission School in Ravulapalem, Andhra Pradesh, India.

The Mission includes teaching to children at the school and being with the boarding children. They are also working at (PARA) Peoples Action for Rural Awakening which helps educate and advocate for rural Dalit people and their kids, who have been oppressed by the larger society for many generations. PARA welcomes volunteers and contributions to assist them in their work. Reuben and Madeline also will share their experiences visiting the various Hindu temples. They were inspired to make the trip by our own Rebecca Malke and John Eleganti, both of whom have worked with the school.

Sunday, August 16, 2009, 10:00 am "UU General Assembly 2009," presented by Rachel Long and Ingrid West. Our delegates to this year's GA, the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association, both found the many offerings, including workshops, courses, business meetings and worship services enriching and inspiring. They returned recharged with many ideas about how to make our wonderful Prairie UU Society even better. They will try to give you a feel for the experience of gathering with more than 3000 UU's, as well as share some of the insights they gained.

Religious Education News

We're half-way through the summer and I hope so far you're all enjoying the beautiful weather and some family vacations. Here in the religious education department we're making some big changes.



On July 25th we will be repainting the walls and next month replacing the floor tiles. Our space is in need of a fresh, new face. Cracks, chips and dirt will be replaced with new rugs, pillows and bright, new colors. It'll be done just in time for the start of the new RE year which will be Sunday, August 30th.

Now, before classes can start we are still in need of teachers. If we don't have teachers we don't have a class. We've already had to cancel one RE event due to lack of volunteers so hopefully we won't have to cancel RE classes. If you would like to take a turn at teaching please let me know or our new RE Chair, Robin Proud.

If you are not able to teach but would still like to help there are still several more Sunday's open to be with our students this summer. You can come downstairs and make crafts, paint, read or take the kids to the park. And we are also in need of people to help in the nursery holding babies. A sign-up sheet is posted in the meeting hall.

Unfortunately we had to cancel Summer Spree, which was to take place July 24-26th. This time we had enough volunteers but not enough participants. The RE Committee will be looking for an alternative for the month of August. Any ideas or suggestions are greatly appreciated.

I'm sure we'll have more than enough families taking part in next months Summer Splash pool party. This annual event is for families and other Prairie members and friends to get together one last time before the start of the school year. There will be more information posted on this fun event so stay tuned!

Rebecca Malke (YREC)
youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org

We're Redecorating Prairie's Downstairs!

This summer, you will see fresh paint and flooring appear in the Religious Education (RE) area at Prairie. I hope that many of you will assist with the project (contact Robin Proud or Al Nettleton to volunteer to move furniture, clean and repair walls, or paint). I particularly look forward to having a floor that is in good repair throughout the RE area. It will be a pleasure to set up classrooms for the RE year without having to give a thought to placing rugs where they will cover missing or damaged floor tiles. Our existing patchwork of flooring has certainly led a long and useful life - some of it is 50 years old - but it is dilapidated at best, and nonexistent at worst. It's pretty clear that it's time for new flooring.

The decision to repaint the walls downstairs at Prairie has not been so easy, and I'm sure some of you will not agree with it. The beautiful murals done with such love by Metje and others in our community have given our downstairs charm and personality for many years, and are beloved by many of our members, young and old. Unfortunately, time has taken a toll on our walls. In addition to the ordinary wear and tear that leads to holes in the walls and scrapes and chips in the paint, we have had some serious floods downstairs in recent years, which have led to very

visible damage to the walls and floors. Parents who look at the water damage are sometimes concerned about mold problems and whether our basement is a healthy place for their children to spend time. Though we are able to tell these parents that new drains have been installed, and our basement is now good and dry (thanks to Al Nettleton's diligence), it's discouraging to have an RE environment that raises these doubts, now that we no longer have water problems. Since we do not have a staff of art restoration experts who can repair and repaint the walls while keeping the murals intact, we on the RE committee believe the time has come to paint over them. Personally, I feel that it is important to have an RE space that is well maintained and visibly cared for, as a reflection of the care we give the children in our program. I've taken many photographs of the murals. Let me know if you would like to have photos of any particular areas, and I will give you prints.

We plan that our current crop of RE kids will be involved in decorating our refurbished space in the months to come. Please let me know if you have suggestions for projects, or if you would like to help.

*Karen Deaton
for the Religious Education Committee*

Our Society

Summer Reads

On Sunday, June 28, Rose Smith led our annual "Summer Reads" program. Attendees shared books they had read recently that they recommended for others to read. The following list gives each book's author and title and notes the person who picked and talked about that book. Thanks to Rose for coordinating this wonderful summer tradition.

Fiction

Bennett, Alan, *The Uncommon Reader*, 2007 (Mary Frantz)
Boyle, T.C., *The Women*, 2009 (Anne Lundin)
Coelho, Paulo, *The Alchemist: A Fable about Following Your Dream*, 1988 (Dave Zakem)
DuPrau, Jeanne, *The City of Ember*, 2004 (Elizabeth Macasaet)
Follett, Ken, *The Pillars of the Earth*, 1989 (Cara Abts)
Ford, Jamie, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*, 2009 (Orange Schroeder)
Lehane, Dennis, *The Given Day*, 2008 (Andrew Somers)
Miller, Sue, *While I was Gone*, 2000 (Gordon Cunningham)
Moore, Christopher, *Lamb*, 2002 (Nick Abts)
Morrow, James, *The Last Witchfinder*, 2006 (Nancy Graham)
Nesaule, Agate, *In Love with Jerzy Kosinski*, 2009 (Rose Smith)
Shaffer, Mary Ann, and Annie Barrows, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, 2009 (Jean Matos)
Tsukiyama, Gail, *The Street of a Thousand Blossoms*, 2007 (Gordon Cunningham)
Ward, Logan, *See You in a Hundred Years*, 2007 (Elizabeth Macasaet)
Wilhelm, Hans, *The Royal Raven*, 1996 (Doleta Chapru)

Nonfiction

Berry, Faith, *Before & Beyond Harlem: Biography of Langston Hughes*, 1983 (Metje Butler)
Bryson, Bill, *In a Sunburned Country*, 2001 (Gordon Cunningham)
Douglass, James, *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters*, 2008 (Bob Reuschlein)
Flanagan, Caitlin, *To Hell with All That: Loving and Loathing Our Inner Housewife*, 2006 (Kim Truog)
Goodwin, Jason, *Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire*, 1999
Gould, Steven Jay, *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History*, 1992 (John Frantz)
Granby, Ben, *Welcome To The Bethlehem Star Hotel: An Account of Life in Palestine with Descriptions of People, Places and Incidents*, 2006 (Bob Park)
Irvine, Vicki, *The Girlfriends' Guide to the First Year of Motherhood*, 1997 (Kim Truog)
Isaacson, Walter, *Einstein: His Life and Universe*, 2008 (Al Nettleton)
Kingsolver, Barbara, Camille Kingsolver and Steven L. Hopp, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, 2007 (Heidi Hughes)
Leopold, Aldo, *A Sand County Almanac*, (Phoenix Wardell)
McElvaine, Robert, *Grand Theft Jesus: The Hijacking of Religion in America*, 2008 (Kate Liu)
Menzies, Gavin, *1421: The Year China Discovered America*, 2003
Myron, Vicki, and Bret Witter, *Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World*, 2008 (Rose Smith)
Perry, Michael, *Coop: A Year of Poultry, Pigs, and Parenting*, 2009 (Orange Schroeder)
Pollan, Michael, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, 2008 (Galen Smith)
Sears, Robert, *The Vaccine Book: Making the Right Decision for Your Child*, 2007 (Estrella Donald)

Shubin, Neil, *Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body*, 2008 (Barb Park)
Talbot, David, *Brothers: The Hidden History of the Kennedy Years*, 2007 (Bob Reuschlein)
Weatherford, Jack, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, 2004
Wordsworth, Dorothy, Mary Moorman ed., *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, 1971 (Ruth Calden)
Dawson, George and Richard Glabman, *Life is So Good*, 2001 (Katherine Peterson)

Prairie Elders Meet July 28th

Prairie people over 65 are invited to the PRAIRIE ELDERS meeting Tuesday, July 28. Prairie Elders aims to provide good times and mutual support for Prairie UU Members and Friends over 65. Current participants range from age 65 to 90-something. We welcome other UUs who live in the facility where we meet. Informal conversation begins at 1:30 pm, more formal discussion is from 2:00-4:00. Location details are below. Newcomers are always welcome - last month two interesting and talented newcomers enlivened our discussion.

This month's topic is "A crisis in our lives: how we handled it and what we gleaned from it." This is an opportunity to share rich experiences and learn from each other without revealing parts of our lives we wish to keep private. If appropriate, humor mixed with serious thoughts would be welcome. Our "round robin" format gives all who wish to an opportunity to speak and to hear. On any given topic there may be people who prefer just to listen. Topics alternate between general issues and personal interests.

We meet in the Nakoma Room, in the Heritage Oaks building of Oakwood Village West. You can park in front or underneath the building. You may bring snacks to share if you wish, and please bring your own beverage cup. Call contacts below for directions or a ride.

Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Gordon Cunningham 230-3367, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

From Your Delegates to the UU General Assembly

For those of you who have never been, GA is an intense experience. Sessions start at 7 am and end around 11:30 pm, not including parties at the end of the day. Any time either of us went out to eat, we found other UU's to join and chat with. We shared stories about our congregations, both successes and struggles. We met folks from fellowships of 30 people, large congregations over 1000 members, and everything in between. We discussed issues around facilities, social action, governance, and religious education. We compared experiences of lay ministry, professional ministers, and the range of theological positions in our congregations and our denomination. It was encouraging and refreshing to hear of others going through struggles like ours, to get great ideas from others, and to offer suggestions in areas where Prairie is doing well.

We found that in many ways, Prairie is doing well, and often better than other societies in our culture, governance and decision-making, and programming. We also have much to learn from others, and could benefit greatly from stronger connections with other societies and our denominational resources. Unitarian Universalism is a living faith, with plenty of generally healthy differences of opinion, but general consensus on the important issues. A catch phrase we heard again and again was "standing on the side of love." On immigration, gay marriage, peacemaking and a host of other concerns the UUA proclaims this as our guide and call to action. We can all agree that as UU's we want to let love be the fuel that allows and pushes us to work for peace and justice in the world. We left feeling great about being Unitarian Universalists.

We will be sharing some of our experiences and insights with you at a Sunday Service August 16. Please join us in celebrating our diverse UU faith, and rededicate yourself to helping your Society in its goal of strengthening and inspiring us to heal our world.

Ingrid West, Adult RE Chair, and Rachel Long, President

Humanist Union to Discuss Growth Strategies

The next meeting of the Humanist Union will be on Sunday Aug. 2nd and the topic will be "Growth strategies for free thinking groups: what works and doesn't work?" A panel of representatives from local organizations will share their experiences to start things off, followed by an open brainstorming session. We will start with potluck lunch with all of Prairie, with panel presentations and discussion from 12:30 to 1:30 pm. Humanist Union monthly meetings usually occur on the first Sunday of the month, and are posted on the Events page of the group's website at <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/>.

Spanish Speaker's Potluck

On Thursday, August 6th, at 6:30 pm, the Spanish Speaker's group will meet for potluck dinner at the home of Ray Nashold, 5410 Esther Beach Rd. Please call Ray at 222-3021 for directions, or call Rosemary Dorney for information or to arrange a ride.

Social Action Committee News

The Social Action Committee has several events going on at Prairie in the coming weeks. On July 19th, they will be coordinating the Sunday service on Palestine, and following that up the following week on July 26th with a presentation of the play *Seven Jewish Children*. Descriptions for both of these programs are listing in the "Upcoming Programs" section of the newsletter. The social action committee will be rehearsing for the play on Saturday, July 25th, at 10:30. For more information, please contact Mary Somers, Social Action Chair, 276-8397 or [marysomers44\(at\)charter.net](mailto:marysomers44(at)charter.net).

Prairie Family Fall Retreat, October 23-25, 2009

This fall, the weekend of October 23rd will be the date of Prairie's fall retreat. For the first time, our retreat will be at Pine Lake, in a beautiful, wooded area about a 1 ½ hour drive north of Madison. The website for the camp is <http://www.wisconsinumc.org/PineLake/>, if you would like to see some pictures. For the athletically inclined, facilities include a volleyball court, a baseball diamond and a basketball court. For the nautically inclined, at the lake itself there are canoes, rowboats and paddle boats, as well as fishing. Finally, for the gastronomically and pyromatically inclined, there is a picnic area with a fire pit. One of the cabins is set up to accommodate crafts, and there will of course be many rooms available for meetings and workshops (we are UU's, after all!) In that same vein, if you want to offer a workshop or a program in one of those many rooms, please let me know. If you can offer a program, please let me know when you plan to arrive at Pine Lake and how long you plan to stay. We will also need people who would be willing to devote an hour or so to childcare, as we expect some babies and toddlers. Hope to see you all there!

Phyllis Long, Retreat Program Coordinator
[plong373\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:plong373(at)gmail.com), 608-325-7397

Housing and Property News

Prairie volunteers are needed to paint the basement walls and trim on July 25 – 9:00 – 2:00. This aesthetic improvement is badly needed, as it has been about 30 years since most of it was painted. Please contact Al Nettleton at 238-6053 or [aanett\(at\)execpc.com](mailto:aanett(at)execpc.com) if you can help. Bring rollers & pans and brushes for latex paint if you have them.

The search for a building consultant is underway. The Housing & Property and Long Range Planning committees have worked together to mail out a request for consultant services to assess the structure and functioning of the Prairie Meeting House. The strategic plan Prairie adopted last year calls for this review so that we can explore options for improving our building.

Al Nettleton, H&P Chair

Movie Group

Prairie's Film Group will meet Thursday, August 20, at 7:00 pm to view "The Cats of Mirikitani." From the movie website, "Eighty-year-old Jimmy Mirikitani survived the trauma of WWII internment camps, Hiroshima, and homelessness by creating art. But when 9/11 threatens his life on the New York City streets and a local filmmaker brings him to her home, the two embark on a journey to confront Jimmy's painful past. An intimate exploration of the lingering wounds of war and the healing powers of friendship and art, this documentary won the Audience Award at its premiere in the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival." Please bring snacks to share. Future films are: Sept 17 – "When the Levees Broke" (part 1) and Oct 15 – "Black Narcissus."

Strategic Planning: Our Next Steps

On 7/12/09, twelve of your congregation's leaders met with the Central Midwest District's Congregational Services Director, Ian Evison, for a three-hour planning session. What prompted this meeting, and what did we accomplish?

In essence, there is a need for our congregation to consider some critical issues, as outlined below. But *before* we do the hard work of tackling the topics as a congregation, the Board wanted to discuss what a good decision-making process looks like. How can we best facilitate congregational participation? What can we learn from past decision-making experiences, both within Prairie and from other UU congregations? And most importantly, how can the decision-making process itself strengthen our community - regardless of the outcome?

The major issues that Prairie is currently facing fall into three topics:

1. Many UU congregations find that their governance (organizational structure, e.g.

structure of the Board) needs change over time. For example, in smaller congregations it may be efficient for every committee head to participate directly on the Board, while for larger congregations with an expanded number of specialized committees, this may become impractical. Thus, do we need to revise our governance model and possibly change the composition of our Board? How do we accommodate issues of time management and effective communication?

2. Secondly, the decision of whether to call a settled minister merits careful and deliberate consideration. For those not familiar with terminology regarding UU ministerial relationships, a “contract” ministerial relationship – for example, our current arrangement with Rev. Ralph Tyksinski – is for a set period of time (usually one year), in which specific services and aspects of the relationship are spelled out. A “settled” minister, in contrast, enters a long-term relationship with a congregation. This relationship is initiated by the congregation issuing a “call” for a minister, which is responded to by UU ministers seeking a congregational home. Before considering whether to issue a call, UU congregations are encouraged to envision what such a long-term commitment would look like within their society, and whether they are ready to make such a commitment.
3. Additionally, there are many considerations to be made regarding physical space. In order to meet the needs of a growing and changing congregation, do we remodel our current space? Is it possible to expand in our present location? Do we need to consider whether to move to a new location in the future? What are we capable of doing in a financially responsible way?

During our meeting, we talked about our mission, and the aspects of decision making in our congregation that we felt were most important. We focused on staging - which of these issues is most critical, and which should come first? It was a difficult discussion, as all these issues are vital to our society's future. We are pleased to say we reached agreement on the steps we feel will best meet the congregation's current needs. The Long Range Planning Committee is working out the specifics for launching a congregational decision-making process, but we will describe the outlines of our Board's consensus.

In the next year, our major focus will be to determine whether we want to call a settled minister (point 2 above). We will be presenting information about the range of ministerial relationship options, and discussing how professional ministry fits with Prairie's vision and mission. By autumn, you will know when these sessions will be scheduled, and the timeline for making a decision. We encourage every member of the congregation to participate in these important discussions.

We will defer decisions on major remodeling or obtaining a new building while we gather information about our options regarding our existing building, including hiring a consultant to advise us, as stated in our Strategic Plan. We will continue making minor improvements to our current building, both in function and aesthetics.

The Board will be educating itself on options for governance, working with the district and talking with other congregations. We do not expect to reach the point of recommending any changes to the congregation this year; rather, next year's Board is likely to be working on decision-making about governance. We appreciate the trust you have placed in us to help lead Prairie into its next stage and, as always, welcome your feedback. Thank you!

Rachel Long, Prairie UU President, and Robyn Perrin, Long Range Planning Chair

All-Society Potluck August 2nd

The next all-society potluck is scheduled for Sunday, August 2, 2009, after our Sunday service. This is no ordinary potluck - it has a theme! If you would like, to follow our discussion of [The Omnivore's Dilemma](#) by Michael Pollan at the service, please bring something that fits one of these categories: 1- a corn based food, as close to the field as possible; 2- an item prepared by yourself from items you have grown or caught; or 3- a local, farmer's-market based meal. In addition, there will be cake to celebrate Jean Matos's successful sale of her Madison home, and the Humanist Union will join us for the meal before their program at 12:30pm.

Prairie Book Club Meets July 19th

The Prairie Book Club will meet on Sunday, July 19th, after the service to discuss [The Sewing Circles of Herat](#) by Christina Lamb. In addition to discussing the book, they will be choosing books for the fall.

WOW group

Prairie's Women's group, known as WOW, will meet on Saturday, August 1, at 9:00 am at Prairie for breakfast potluck and conversation. New members are always welcome. For more information or to get on the Prairie WOW email list, contact Mary Somers, 276-8397 or marysomers44(at)charter.net.

Prairie Archiving

Prairie Society has generated many documents in its 42 year history - newsletters, policies, minutes, financial ledgers, and more. Many of these records are here at Prairie, and many are in member's homes. One of my tasks as your administrator is to attempt to reign in the paper dragon, and help Prairie have a consistent policy and place to store all of its valuable documents. To begin this process, there is a draft archiving policy, which I will post at the back of the meeting house, or you can email me and I will send you a copy. There is also a meeting scheduled at Prairie on Wednesday, July 29th at 7pm, to go over the policy and begin to sort through some of the boxes in my office. Anyone with an interest in Prairie's history is welcome to come to this meeting, or to give feedback about the policy.

Kate Liu, Prairie Administrator, admin(at)uuprairie.org

New Members

Jennifer Bunner, new member

Jennifer Bunner has been busy. She joined Prairie last fall but only this spring was she able to find time to be interviewed for her new member bio. What has she been doing? In October of last year she got married to Tony Sass of Madison. Since then she and Tony have bought a house, finished moving into it, and started a flock of chickens. A chicken coop being necessary, Jennifer built a coop, although she had never used power tools before. All of these endeavors are reasons why you may not have seen her Sunday mornings at Prairie lately. She attends the Humanist Potluck, however, and plans to come more often to the Sunday service now that she is settled.

Jennifer was born and grew up in West Virginia until the age of 12, at which time her father got a job in Madison and her family moved here. She was raised in the Mormon faith, but her love of science and the scientific method caused her to question Mormon beliefs from an early age. She was strongly influenced by the writing of Isaac Asimov, which led to her questioning of "givens". Skepticism looks at all assertions--religious, supernatural, paranormal, etc.--and subjects them to scientific inquiry, looking for evidence to support or refute. It's not surprising, then, that Jennifer is a co-founder of the Madison Skeptics.

It was a natural next step to become an atheist. Jennifer lost interest in "church" because she did not expect to come across an organized religion that accepted her viewpoints. But as she got older, Jennifer found that she missed the sense of community and shared values that she had felt within the Mormon congregation. Her attendance at the Humanist potlucks introduced her to Prairie people and the UU principles and it was in this way that she found the values and community that she could feel at home with. She appreciates the fact that UUism doesn't mandate what to believe and that she is free to think for herself.

Jennifer is employed as a Quality Control technician at Third Wave Technologies, a biomedical engineering firm based in Madison. One of TWT's focuses is finding ways to use genetic information to fight disease. Among other projects, Jennifer has worked on a test for identifying cystic fibrosis. In addition to her interest in science, she has a deep interest in environmental issues, enjoys gardening and loves animals. Besides chickens, her menagerie includes a Muscovy duck, three cats, "Steve", the bearded dragon, and three degus. (Degus are appealing rodents with a highly developed social structure and communication system.)

Jennifer is enthusiastic about connecting more with Prairie people, getting involved with our green sanctuary certification and volunteering for social action projects. She expects that she will get back from the Prairie community as much as she puts in, or more.

Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

UU congregations, their members, their leaders, their ministers, have long and sometimes memorable experiences of spending a lot of their time and energy dealing with differences. I have observed in my tenure as Prairie's Consulting Minister that these differences can sometimes revolve around varied assumptions that we sometimes hesitate to expose or express for fear of offending another member. For example, should we include the children in some part of our Sunday Service. Sometimes our differences will involve the vocabulary preferences and meanings of those with a more Humanist framework of meaning or will involve those who have a more "spiritual" framework of meaning. Here are a few examples of how our differences can sometimes expose themselves.



Suppose you wanted to invite a friend or co-worker to attend Prairie for a Sunday service. Would you say?, "We have a Sunday program". Or, perhaps you might say, "We have a variety of Sunday services where we listen to an informative talk by a speaker from the Madison area, or sometimes we have a talk (or a "sermon" or "presentation") from our minister". We sing "hymns" (or "musical selections") "We also have one minute of silence". Your

conversation with your friend or co-worker might expose you to some of the important differences that always exist in any diverse congregation or religious community. These kinds of conversations can sometimes be difficult and conflicted. Do we use the preferred Prairie "vocabulary" in our explanations to friends and/or co-worker? Or do we substitute a word that might better explain what we believe is our experience on Sunday morning?

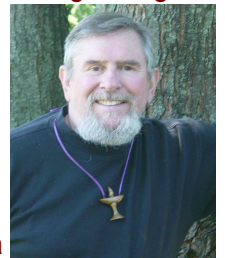
Prairie will begin in these coming months having at least one "difficult" conversation around the decision to call a settled minister to serve the congregation. This conversation will be a major coordinating task for the Long Range Planning Committee. As part of my role in assisting the Long Range Planning Committee in this task I am offering the following questions suggested by the Alban Institute to help prepare the congregation. This preparation involves a series of both written and oral communications in which members learn what is going to happen at a meeting and are asked to consider a number of questions, such as:

1. What kinds of disturbing conversations have you participated in previously around this issue and why did you find them disturbing?
2. Are there examples you can provide of conversations around the issue that have been useful?
3. What words relating to the issue do you find hurtful?
4. What language might be offensive to those with the opposing view?
5. What are your highest purposes for having this conversation, both for yourself and the congregation?
6. Why does it matter that a constructive conversation about this issue be had in this community?
7. What is it about this community that matters to you?
8. What are you afraid might happen during this conversation that would cause you to regret your participation?
9. What might happen that would cause you to feel your participation in this conversation was a good investment of your time and energy?
10. What would it take to bring your best self to the conversation?
11. What agreements or ground rules might help you bring this best self to the meeting?

Here are some definitions that might be helpful in these conversations. Just what is the difference between a Called(settled), or Hired minister and how does that affect the church membership? The following information comes from the Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship's September Newsletter (<http://www.luf.ca/stratplannewsletter.pdf>) and several other sources.

"One of the best analogies comes from the world of real estate. Entering into a search for a minister is like being a first-time homebuyer. We have a picture in our mind of the ideal new home (or new minister.) We have endless questions about a 'buying' process that seems mysterious and even untrustworthy. We wonder if there are creative ways to do it that will get us a 'good deal.' Maybe, but it is also important that we understand the usual process. When a UU congregation is searching for a minister, they work with the Transitions office in the Department of Ministry and Professional Leadership at the Unitarian Universalist Association in Boston. (Note: PUUS also works with the MidWest District.) The Transitions Office provides counsel and resources to congregations facing changes in their professional ministry, and helps to provide interim ministers to serve the congregation through the transition."

A Minister Is A Minister, Or ...What's The Difference? "While there are a lot of different titles for ministers, they basically fall into three general categories. Again we could make real estate comparisons."



Settled/Permanent/Called Minister: "This is home. We've found just the right match and we make a commitment to it for the long haul. We're prepared to 'live' here indefinitely. What distinguishes a called minister is not whether it is full time or part time, but rather the commitment, the covenant that the minister and we have made one to another. The minister's "call" comes from the congregation as a whole. A contract is signed and perhaps reviewed every few years, but there is no time limit. In other words, called ministers serve for an indefinite period of time. A "called minister" is truly the congregation's choice."

Contract/Consulting/Hired Minister: "We might call this home, but it's a rental. We resign a lease periodically, and we have the ability to give notice and move rather easily. Again, this could be full time or part time; what distinguishes it is a lesser degree of commitment on both sides. Perhaps we don't care for it in the same way because we don't own it. Contract/Hired ministers, and any others who are hired by the Board of Trustees, serve for the fixed period of their contracts."

Interim Minister: "We've made a decision to buy a house; and an interim minister gives us temporary housing and helps us to ready ourselves to make the big purchase. Part of the interim's task is to help

us take stock of who we are as a congregation and who we hope to be, in order to help us to identify just the right minister to walk with us into the future. Because an interim minister's placement is only temporary, because the time between the minister's announcement of departure and the interim's desired arrival is short, the interim hiring process is simple, brief, and competitive. Interim ministers who are hired by the Board of Trustees serve for the fixed period of their contracts, stipulating a specified start and termination date."

Some Limitations:

"While it is possible for a contract minister to be called by a congregation, it is generally not recommended. Calling an "inside candidate" robs the congregation of the deep discernment process it must go through to call a minister. It colors our ideas of what might be best for us by not allowing us to see the full spectrum of possibilities. Ministers who are in fellowship with the UUA belong to a professional association, the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. The UUMA encourages ministers to take positions at churches that have used the UUA settlement process in order to ensure a fair and equitable hiring process that gives equal opportunity to all. Going outside of the system may to some degree limit the candidates who are interested in coming here."

I hope this process will tap into the abundance of good will that Prairie members have drawn from in the past in making the "tough decisions" about the future of this "beloved community".

Glad to be journeying with you,
Rev. Ralph

From the Wider UU Community

James Reeb UU Congregation seeks a Choir Director

James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation, a growing, open and affirming congregation located on the east side of Madison, is seeking a part-time choir director. Time commitment is 15-20 hours per month. Lively and relevant music of widely varying genres is a central part of our worship, and the music program is highly appreciated. The adult choir currently has 14 members, rehearses every Thursday evening, and sings for Sunday services once or twice a month September through mid-June. Salary is approximately \$3,500 for the church year (12 months, with an emphasis on non-summer months; church year runs July 1st to June 30th). To see the complete job description, visit our website at www.jruuc.org.

Mind, Body & Soul Class Space for Girls

First Unitarian Society has room available for more 8th or 9th grade girls in their *Mind, Body and Soul* class. *Mind, Body and Soul* is a relationship and sex ed curriculum that combines lessons from *Our Whole Lives* and *Love U2*. We strive to have a good gender balance in this class and currently would like to add more girls to our Saturday class, which meets 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. starting September 19th. If you would like more information or would like to register, please contact Leslie Ross at 233-9774, x. 119 or at [leslier\(at\)fusmadison.org](mailto:leslier(at)fusmadison.org).



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