

# Prairie Fire

**December 2014**

## Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)



- Sat. Dec 6** 5-7 am **Men's Shelter Breakfast:** Prairie & Reeb  
9 am **WOW@Prairie**
- Sun. Dec 7** 10 am **Service - "Quakers"** - Ken Haydock  
**Nifty Gifty (RE event)**  
11:45 am **Humanist Union**  
5:30 pm **Men's Group**
- Sat. Dec 13** 12-4 pm **Drop & Shop**
- Sun. Dec 14** 10 am **Service - "Following Yonder Star"** - RE Players  
11:30 am **Prairie Book Club** (with potluck)
- Mon. Dec 15** 6:30 pm **Spanish Speakers Potluck**
- Sun. Dec 21** 10 am **Service - The Symbol Tree**  
11:30 am **Soup Sunday**
- Sun. Dec 28** 10 am **Service - "Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?"** - Rev. Sandra Ingham

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**Men's Shelter Breakfast: Prairie & Reeb:** If you can help make breakfast, please let Paula Pachciarz know. (pjpchz@gmail.com) (Details below in Prairie News)

**WOW@Prairie:** Women of Wonder meets the first Saturday of the month at Prairie. Bring a breakfast/brunch dish to share. Contact: Anne Urbanski, 221-4053; aneu53714@gmail.com

**"Quakers":** Ken was one of the team teachers of the high school RE class last year on world religions. He did a bit of research on the Quakers and will share with us some of the highlights of his findings.

**Nifty Gifty** is the annual RE event where the kids make gifts for family or friends during the time the adults are upstairs. Come one come all for a crafty morning!

**The Humanist Union** meeting will start with a potluck lunch at 11:45, followed by a presentation led by Ken Haydock entitled "Quakers in the 21st Century."

**The Men's Group** meets the first Sunday of the month at Prairie. Bring a dish to pass. Contact: Dan Proud derrproud@att.net

**Drop & Shop:** Prairie will provide childcare for the season's shoppers. A donation is suggested (See Prairie News below).

**"Following Yonder Star":** We have all been anxiously waiting the debut of the camel in the play produced by Robin Proud's 5th-9th grade class since the snow cancellation last year. Even though we don't consider ourselves magi, we can all relate to the feeling of setting out on a journey in life, not knowing exactly where we are going or how it will turn out. The long awaited play is about three wise men - and their wives! The congregation will participate by singing carols between scenes. Our younger classes will join us for a final tableau - feel free to bring your cameras!

**Prairie Book Club** will be discussing *Salt, Sugar, and Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us* by Michael Moss. Moss, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter at *The New York Times* writes the explosive story of the rise of the processed food industry and its link to the emerging obesity epidemic. Michael Moss reveals how companies salt, sugar, and fat to addict us and, more important, how we can fight back. (Goodreads review)

**Spanish Speakers Potluck** will be held at Ema Pachon's home: 1459 E. Main St #205. We will celebrate the Christmas season (no gifts please). Please bring a dish to pass, if you can. Everyone welcome! More info or to arrange a ride contact Rosemary Dorney 238-4382.

**The Symbol Tree** is an opportunity for Prairie as a community to take stock of the past year. Each of us brings an object to place on our Holiday Tree that symbolizes something significant from the past year. Something we are proud of: a photocopy of a straight A grade card; a team photo; a paint chip from remodeling or a souvenir from a trip, for example. Something life changing: a wedding invitation; a change of address form or adoption papers for a new pet. It could be something that you are struggling to overcome. This is one of those sharing opportunities where we learn about members of this loving community.

**"Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?":** I am often surprised at the reactions many Unitarian Universalists have to Jesus. They range from anger, dismissal, scorn and most surprisingly to me, fear. Who is this person that we are so afraid of and definitely don't want shoved down our throats by the dominant culture? Why are we so willing to give him up to the Fundamentalists or even to more moderate Christians? Aren't we in danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater? I don't think that we should give up on Jesus. Find out why on this last Sunday of the month in which his birthday is celebrated.

### **Message from the President** **~ Gary Gates**

Prairie is a lay-led congregation. What does this mean now that we have a minister? The roles of the Program Committee, Caring Committee, other committees and even of the Board relative to the minister seem to overlap. Supervision of staff was the responsibility of the corresponding committee or the Board. These roles have changed without a clear picture of where we'd like to go in the long run.

We also have changed our governing structure to have a Board separate from the committee chairs. What does this mean for the interactions not only between the Board and committees but also with the minister?

We participate in many "social action" activities, such as helping prepare breakfast for homeless men, helping with the Road Home meals and overnights, purchasing MUM bakery goods, being a member of MOSES, putting money in the basket on Sundays for various charities and a variety of other worthwhile things. But there is no cause that we as a church are really all out for. Most members probably don't even know what social actions we are involved in but are content to let someone else handle our commitment.

Mysteriously, many of our longtime members aren't feeling as vigorous as they did years ago and would like someone else to take over responsibilities they have had in the past. Finally, what is the dividing line between a "lay-led" volunteer job and other volunteer services? In the past, it didn't matter how these questions were answered, because all functions were performed by congregation members. Now we need to decide what we want to do as a congregation and what we want to delegate to "staff".

Some have said we are getting (or soon will be) too big to be a lay-led congregation. Others have voiced a feeling that it is getting harder to find the volunteers to carry out Prairie's functions. And now we have a budget crunch. I believe that we need to take a long look at ourselves and figure out just what Prairie wants to be known for and to do in the wider world around us. Let me know if you want to be part of a task force to look at all areas of Prairie and figure out where we go from here. Sandy has already volunteered to be part of this effort.

### **Musings from the Minister**

**~ Reverend Sandra Ingham**

Our "Prairie Fire" Newsletter editor, Susan Herr-Hoyman, recently asked for people's thoughts on "what it means to be a lay-led congregation". I must confess that I don't understand this question. Prairie is not "lay-led". Nor is Prairie "minister-led". Prairie is both. Even though I am a half-time consulting minister, I hope that I do some leading. And even though Prairie, at this point in time, is no longer relying solely on lay leaders, lay people are still doing a lot of leading in the Prairie community. In other words, I think that we have the best of both worlds at Prairie: sharing the leadership.

As I said at the Parish Meeting a couple of weeks ago, I see an amazing community here at Prairie with a lot of dedicated, passionate volunteers, aka lay leaders. OF COURSE, WE ALWAYS NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS!! But, this is not unique to Prairie; this is true of every organization (churches, nonprofits, social justice movements, to name a few) that relies heavily on volunteers.

Is Prairie changing? Yes. Organizations have to change, or risk losing their momentum or their purpose -- or dying out. Are we struggling with communication at Prairie? Yes. Every organization of which I have been a part struggles with how best to communicate, especially if and when that organization is growing, as Prairie is. Could we be better at listening to each other -- really listening? Yes, we could -- and so could almost every human being I have ever met.

Are we sometimes unclear about who should make what decisions and about who is responsible to whom? Oh, yes, we are. But, again this goes along with change and with trying to expand our

understanding of what Prairie's identity is and what we want it to be. Another way to express this would be by completing this statement, "We want to be known as the church/society/fellowship that \_\_\_\_\_."

Did you know that Prairie's Board and Committees are hard at work writing Policies and Procedures for us? Once these are written and adopted, we will have gone a very long way towards addressing the above concerns. Writing policies and procedures is not particularly exciting -- it's not "sexy", believe me! But, we are making progress. Of course, finishing this task won't be the end of the challenge... the work we do at Prairie is an ongoing challenge. And, what is this work of ours? I believe that our work is doing ministry together, which includes, but is not limited to: continuing to make Prairie more inclusive; caring for each other as a community; taking our beliefs and our desire to do good in the world out into the wider community.

During the upcoming manic month that we call December, I hope that you will find time for reflection about Prairie and what volunteer opportunities might interest you in the New Year. Between December 13 and 20, I will be using some of my study leave time and I will be away from Madison. As always, though, I will be checking voice and e-mail, should you need to reach me during that time. HAPPY HOLIDAYS! Rev. Sandy

## **Prairie News**

**Artists of the Month** are Wayne Hammerstrom (aka WanderNWayne), photographer, and Phil Nelson, designer and artist. Wayne says, "Colors exist between black and white, and I enjoy wandering among their hues. I carry a camera with me seeking to capture images, memories and emotions. Only using an enhanced point-and-shoot camera I'm able to easily pack my small format camera in my pockets, and use it unobtrusively aimed at my subjects. Recently I've learned to edit my digital images toward a final impressive print. In many ways, I'm an accidental photographer, joyfully experimenting with each next image." His photos are mainly from western U.S. and a few from elsewhere.

Phil says, "This gallery is a bringing together of our community in a testimony of the creative human spirit and a glimpse into the life story of each person whose work hangs upon this wall. My hope is that as you view these works separately and as a whole you will find a bit of joy that each individual had in making these unique works of art." One of the pictures in his gallery was done by our own Judy Lazarus.

**Circle Dinner** groups are set and can begin meeting. Printed contact lists for your group are available in the foyer at Prairie. The groups meet monthly, each hosted by group members on a rotating basis. Your group will have to agree on a meeting date and time. It works best to select a leader/contact person to keep your dinners going smoothly. For help, see Rick Ruecking (838-8540) or Dan Proud (212-3793) from the Membership Committee.

**Drop & Shop:** On Saturday, December 13, Prairie will provide games, crafts, music (maybe even a live musician!), movies and fun for your children while you get some time for shopping! Suggested donation is \$15 for one child, \$20 for two, & \$25 for three or more :) That's less than

\$3 an hour for quality childcare and a whole lot of fun to boot! If you don't have students in RE, consider gifting this to someone you know who does have children! It's a low-cost way to make a big impact for someone who does the daily work of raising great kids :). If you know you can make it please register by emailing [dre@uuprairie.org](mailto:dre@uuprairie.org) - and letting us know how many kids you plan to bring. This will help with planning. Also, if you are looking for a way to 'give back' this holiday season, consider contributing in the following ways: 1) Volunteering with us that day! Get to know some great kids, sing a few songs and have a great time! 2) Donate snacks or juice to keep those kids' blood sugar levels happy! 3) Spread the word to those you know who might be interested in joining us! Thanks for reading! Hope to see you on the 13th!

**A Call for Lay Ministries:** A Lay Ministry in “Prairie-speak” is a set of Sunday service programs developed by clever members and friends under a single theme. This is how Prairie UU Society found its Sunday voice during its first years. Our website has a listing of many of the lay ministries we enjoyed, a few examples of which were: Spirituality & Intellect; Various Aspects of Culture and Personality; Idealists Confront Authority; Community, Myth, and Society; and Art and Religion.

We on the Program Committee think our Sunday programs have been fulfilling and exciting but organizing them into cohesive themes has been difficult to achieve. Exciting exceptions have been programs undertaken by Ken Haydock on religion and Matt Tedesco on the current philosophical considerations of our UU principles. We would like to test the waters of lay ministry once again and call on the congregation to consider and share what ideas you have for developing services or proposing themes you believe are important for us to consider. As a prompt, some have asked for programs on social media and the impact of new technologies that the Committee is unprepared to provide. Other ideas you might consider are in music and the arts, how gaming is influencing society, Privacy, and the NSA, and special histories. Lay ministers may work in teams and do not have to present the services per se, but they must be willing to organize them for delivery over the next two years.

Please consider what services and programs you would like to experience at Prairie over the next two years. The Program Committee would like you to ponder this over the next few months and to share your ideas and proposals with us by March 1, 2015. Mary Mullen and Rick Ruecking have volunteered to answer questions you may have on lay ministries.

**Interfaith Hospitality Network Week** is December 7 to 14. One of Prairie's social action commitments is being a buddy church for Midvale Lutheran as they host homeless families as part of the Interfaith Hospitality Network, which is part of The Road Home. Please consider volunteering to serve dinner or various other jobs to help Prairie honor its commitment to this wonderful organization. You can call Erin Bosch for more information about IHN (238-6285). You can sign up online by going to this address and then clicking on The Road Home signup: <http://www.midvalelutheran.org/> (lower left). There are also job descriptions for the volunteer assignments on that page, down below.

**Men's Shelter Breakfast:** Please consider continuing Prairie's tradition of helping to provide a scrambled egg breakfast for the guys at the men's drop-in shelter at Grace Episcopal once a month. The prep and cooking goes fast and the hot meal is much appreciated by the guys at the

shelter. If you are interested in helping with either breakfast, please contact me. New volunteers would be working with experienced ones from either Prairie or the James Reeb Society. Thank you. Paula Pachciarz 608.206.1770 - [pjpchz@gmail.com](mailto:pjpchz@gmail.com)

**You never know when you might make a difference!** One of my favorite tasks when coordinating a service is selecting a Story For All Ages. When looking for a book for the Sunday Ed Zapala spoke on Veterans Court, I found the delightful story, Night Catch. It is about a soldier whose work takes him halfway around the world. He enlists the help of the North Star for a nightly game of catch with his son. Since the story was written in the voice of a father to a son, I thought it would be fitting to have Ryan Camp read the story to the children. I was pleased with the job Ryan did engaging the children and didn't anticipate any further results from the story I selected. Imagine my surprise when upon returning the book, Ryan told me he had practiced reading the story with his boys and liked the premise of the story so much that he plans to use it when he travels to Abu Dhabi for his job at EPIC! - Penny Eiler

## **RE Circle of Friends**

**~ Holly Tellander, Director of Religious Education**

Lots going on downstairs!

**We have two new interactive bulletin boards:**

**1) “World Wide Joys & Concerns”:** This is intended to focus our students’ attention outward into the community and the world around them. We hope to elicit their ideas and opinions as well as facilitate discussion and direction for future service learning projects. This project is intended to build media consumerism skills and a connection to the world around us. Come on down and add a pin to our board whenever you hear of a joy or concern of which you would like to make others aware. The kids will be doing the same! Come see what moves them!

**2) “What Principle Did You Rock This Week?”:** In this project students take time each Sunday to reflect on how they best lived out our principles in the previous week. Come on down and add your name each week! It’s a wonderful reflection tool!

**Thanksgiving Intergenerational & food drive:** Each class downstairs had a special part in this thought-provoking service. We have also kicked off a food drive as an extension of the discussion started during that service. The two younger classes (Chalice Children & Superheroes) are planning a trip to a local food bank in January to deliver the food we collect. We will get to visit the deep freezer and weigh ourselves on the giant scale! We are excited to see how the food pantries in the greater Madison area work to serve so many people! Keep those canned food donations coming!

**Nifty Gifty & Book Drive:** We are looking forward to Nifty Gifty on Sunday December 7<sup>th</sup>, and hope you are too! Let us know if you would like to volunteer to help with the crafts or if you have a special treat you would like to make and provide for the kids’ snack that day. We are also collecting gently used books to donate to a few local shelters for the holidays. RE students will make bookmarks to donate with the books. We are accepting all types of books in good condition. Some of the students thought it might be nice to include a little note (tucked away in the pages for the recipient to find) about what you loved about the book(s) you donate. It’s a special way to touch someone who might be in hardship – by spreading the love of books!

**Drop & Shop Fun(d)raiser!:** Come hang out with us on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup> from 12-4! We will have crafts, music, movies and games! Suggested donation is \$15 for one child, \$20 for two, \$25 for three or more! That's less than \$3 an hour for quality childcare and a great way to support RE! What more could you ask for?

We do still need volunteers as well. Consider this a great way to spend some time with the RE students and get to know them, as well as give all of Prairie's hardworking parents a well-deserved break! What a great service project for the 'surrogate grandparents' in our congregation! Share a special story or skill with us! We'd love to have you for the whole time or a two-hour shift if that is more feasible! ☺

**RE NEEDS:**

The following items would be greatly appreciated downstairs! Thanks in advance!

String cheese & mini applesauce containers for snacks (ongoing)

Electric pencil sharpener

Treasure box (for birthday prizes and other special rewards!)

**Who's New at Prairie**



**Allyson, Huebert and Chapman**

I grew up as a UU member and attended a church in Mequon, WI. My boys and I relocated to Madison from Milwaukee so that I could complete college with family support, as my parents happily retired in Madison. We've been here for close to three years, but really only these last few months feel as if we've settled here, and Prairie has played a role in that. We discovered Prairie after moving to the Dunn Marsh neighborhood in August. As we were on a stroll back from the park, we had a run-in with Karen and her daughter, Jessie. They welcomed us and showed us around and we've felt so at home at Prairie ever since. I am currently working as a behavior analyst intern for a consultation group in Fitchburg who offers behavioral services to children on the autism spectrum. I'm in grad school and my boys are in Kindergarten. We love to pretend to go on "Hobbit search" hikes at Devil's Lake when it's warm, and also enjoy having people over to cook and have dinner get-togethers with.

**Visit Prairie's website (see below) for further information.**



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