

# Prairie Fire

April 2016

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Pub. Date: 03/27/2016



## Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

- Sun Apr 2** 5:00 a.m.—**Men's Shelter Breakfast**
- Sat Apr 2** 9:00 a.m.—**Prairie WOW** —meets
- Sun Apr 3** 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex
- Sun Apr 3** 10:00 a.m.—**Screen Test** —by Rev. Sandra Ingham
- Sun Apr 3** 11:45 a.m.—**Humanist Union**—meets with Susan Hagstrom
- Sun Apr 3** 5:30-7:00—**Men's Group**—potluck followed by discussion
- Sun Apr 10** 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex
- Sun Apr 10** 10:00 a.m.—**Embracing Chaos: What is Going on in the World and Why We Can Welcome It**—by Rev. Jody Wheldon
- Sun Apr 10** 11:15 a.m.—**DEADLINE FOR RETREAT REGISTRATION**
- Mon Apr 11** 6:00 p.m.—**Finance Committee** meets
- Mon Apr 11** 7:00 p.m.—**Program Committee** meets
- Sun Apr 17** 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex
- Sun Apr 17** 10:00 a.m.—**Universalist Design**—by Rev. Sandra Ingham
- Sun Apr 17** 11:30 a.m.—**Soup Sunday**
- Sun Apr 17** 12:15 p.m.—**Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café**—the **Book Club** will meet in the Annex after Soup Sunday for a discussion of this book by Fannie Flagg
- Sun Apr 24** 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex
- Sun Apr 24** 10:00 a.m.—**Web of All Existence**—by Peter Anderson
- Tues Apr 26** 1:30 p.m.—**Prairie Elders**—meets in the Annex
- Sun May 1** 10:00 a.m.—**All You Ever Needed to Know About Beltane**—  
When May first falls on a Sunday, we have to celebrate the cross quarter day, Beltane. Rumor has it there may even be a Maypole and dancing...
- Fri May 6** 5:00 p.m.—**Prairie Retreat** —begins at Bethel Horizons
- Sun May 8** There will not be a service at Prairie due to the Retreat
- Sun May 8** 12:00 p.m.—**Prairie Retreat** ends

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Sunday, April 3—On the last Sunday in January, I began a conversation with you about what the long-term effects of staring at screens might be. On this first Sunday in April, we will continue that discussion, possibly ranging from apps to robots to search engines to Facebook to who knows what? I fear where humanity might be going by spending so much time looking at screens... but that could just be my "inner Luddite" acting out. Will we forget how to interact with each other? Will we cease to be interested in face-to-face interactions? What will happen to art? To physical activity? To being outside, immersed in nature? Will society become even more uncivil? Is it fair to blame modern technology for our increasingly uncivilized society? Come to Prairie this Sunday and see if we pass the screen test. Rev. Sandy

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Sunday, April 3—This Sunday the Humanist Union will have a *Discussion on the State of Humanism in Fiction* led by Susan Hagstrom. We'll start with our usual potluck lunch at 11:45 a.m. followed by our program from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. Susan asks participants to "Bring in your favorite example of Humanists in literature, and discuss the state of Humanism in action." One source to which Susan will refer is Salmon Rushdie's new book, *Two years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights: A Novel*. Other authors are listed in *Humanism in Literature: Ten Authors to Read*.

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Sunday, April 10—The World conditions appear chaotic and we are upset by events. However, this morning Rev. Wheldon will suggest that humanity is exactly where it must be to evolve to its next stage, in accord with the entire earth community. She has studied this material for decades and is convinced this is one of the most exciting times to be alive in human history—we can make a true difference.

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Sunday, April 17—*Universalist Design*—At the "Who Are Our Neighbors?" workshop in March, we talked about "universal design", a phrase that I had heard before, but did not know what it meant. As many of you may know, the phrase refers to "design responses *that fit for all, not for most.*" The example used to illustrate this concept was curb cutouts, designed initially for people using wheelchairs, walkers, canes, or people who have difficulty stepping up on to a curb. Though designed with a specific set of people in mind, we all use curb cutouts. So it might be with the "Second U" in our faith tradition: Universalism. You could say that it was initially designed (or conceived of) with a specific set of people in mind. Now, however, well into the 21st century, Universalism could be a good fit for all people. Join me in this celebration of the too-often neglected "Other U" in our name.—Rev. Sandy

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Tuesday, April 26—The Prairie Elders will meet on Tuesday, April 26, at 1:30 p.m. in the Annex. This month's discussion topic will be "Senior Centers." Do we visit a center? Why? Why not? And try to visit a senior center in April and let us know about it. Prairie Elders meet for conversation and fellowship on the fourth Tuesday of each month. All older and/or retired Prairie participants are invited to participate in this monthly social event. Discussions are lively and we are able to get to know and appreciate each other. Bring a snack to share. Coffee and tea are provided.

May 6-8—Prairie Family Retreat - May 6-8, 2016!

Registration for the annual Prairie Family Retreat at Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville, WI is now open! Registration forms were attached to the March Prairie Fire and are also available in print in the foyer of the main building.

The fun begins Friday evening, May 6<sup>th</sup> and continues through noon on Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup>. This is a great time for Prairie members to connect with each other in a less hurried environment, have a chance to play, sing, talk, or just linger over coffee.

For those of you who have not attended a Prairie Retreat before, here is the typical schedule:

Friday evening - arrival in the early evening, finger food potluck, board games, bonfire

Saturday - breakfast, programming (arts and crafts, games, discussions, etc.) lunch, more programming, dinner, talent show, and folk dancing

Sunday - breakfast, key log ceremony, clean up, and home again

This is a family friendly retreat weekend. One of our regular childcare providers will be there, and there are plenty of activities for kids to do.

Phyllis Long is coordinating the program and is looking for volunteers to lead programs.

Kate Liu will be the registrar this year, coordinating rooms and meals and whatnot. Note that this year we only have the Farmhouse and the Prairie Center for lodging - the Barn was not available. Camping is also an option. Because lodging will be a little tighter this year, please be prepared to share a room. I would prefer not to have to assign roommates, so if you can talk with others and perhaps arrange to share ahead of time and indicate that on your registration form, that would be very helpful. Closer to the actual retreat dates, final schedules for programming will be available.

Any questions, please contact Kate Liu (about logistical details) - [kgliu311@gmail.com](mailto:kgliu311@gmail.com) 238-9153, or Phyllis Long (about the program) - [plong373@gmail.com](mailto:plong373@gmail.com), 608-325-7397.

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### **MUSINGS FROM THE MINISTER—Sandra Ingham**

In mid-March, I and a few others from Prairie took part in a workshop at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation titled "Who Are Our Neighbors?" Rev. Lisa Presley, a UU minister who is a Congregational Life Consultant from our MidAmerica Region, was our leader. I try to go into these workshops with no expectations, especially when the goals and objectives are described in language that sounds like something out of someone's PhD thesis -- in other words, vague.

I was pleasantly surprised, then, when I had a very good experience. Rev. Presley spoke clearly, using down-to-earth language. The exercises prompted some deep thinking on my part. The conversation about how we handle hospitality in our congregations was invigorating and useful. The most important "take-away" word, in my opinion, was the word *perspective*. Of course, I know that everyone looks at the world from a different perspective -- why, I went to seminary! How could I not know this! Well, I may know it in my head and on an intellectual level, but I still have much to learn about embodying the concept, knowing it in my gut.

Right before the weekend of the workshop, the Dalai Lama was in Madison. When he was talking about education, a passion of his, he said that we need education "so that we can

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Right before the weekend of the workshop, the Dalai Lama was in Madison. When he was talking about education, a passion of his, he said that we need education "so that we can look at things from various angles. From one dimension you can't see fully." Duh! I know this, but I don't always manage to keep it in the forefront of my mind when interacting with others. A few days after the workshop, I saw a Dilbert cartoon in which one character said this to another one, "Your analysis does not conform to my preconceived notions. So my gut instinct is telling me that you are wrong." Who has not interacted with others this way?

We all look at the world in different ways, through different lenses. And there is not a "right" way to do the looking. The challenge is to see past our assumptions and to recognize our personal cultural biases. The challenge is to be aware of our rhinoceros horns and know when those horns are preventing us from having a clear view. [Want to know what I am talking about -- *ask me!*] Rev. Presley emphasized that our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition is uniquely equipped to help humans move beyond mere tolerance to a deeper understanding of our own culture and then to non-evaluative, non-judgemental interaction with other cultures. Ours is a religion that demands that we do this work and gives us a rich historical background to show us the way.

How do *you* change your perspective, switch the angle of the way you are looking at the world? And, how does all this translate into congregational life?

One way that I broaden my perspective and widen my angle of viewing the world is through travel and leaving my comfort zone. I will be doing a fair amount of that in the next few months. I will be in the Southwest from April 23-May 23. I will be working for part of that time and, as always, I will be accessible via phone or email -- with the exception of May 7-13. At the end of June, I will travel to Columbus, Ohio, for the annual ministers meeting and General Assembly. At the end of July, I hope to go to Transylvania for two weeks, a long-held dream of mine.

May the unfolding of another spring give you a new outlook on life! Rev. Sandy

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## **Circle of Friends—Holly Tellander, Dir. Religious Education**

### **MONTHLY THEMES**

April's theme is 'Truth'. Expect to see the newsletter available by email, on the RE website page, and on the front table in the entryway by the first of the month. Are you finding the media suggestions useful? I know our family has had some great conversations (and been introduced to some great new music, movies and books) through the newsletter as we engage with the topic all month. Hopefully your family is finding the same to be true! The newsletter is meant to function as a conversation starter at home throughout the month; a way for families to find deeper connections to UU ideas and practices – as well as to each other!

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- The guest speaker for March on Sunday, March 27th will rescheduled– to accommodate for Easter and Spring Break. Join us on April 24<sup>th</sup> for a chance to listen to a representative of the Catholic faith tradition.

- Humane Society Tour – Students in grades K-5 will be working on projects to help animals during the month of March. A trip to the humane society to share our projects and learn more about how to get involved in this issue will take place on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Our elementary classes worked together to make, hide and sort pet treats to take and donate during our tour. The classes have also made pet beds, pet toys, and pet blankets as they have engaged with the social justice issue of animal cruelty.
  - May Day service – plans are underway for Prairie’s very own May Pole! Mark your calendars for Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup> to participate in this fun activity!
- Transition Sunday – May 22<sup>nd</sup> – Please contact me as soon as possible if your child will be participating!

### **YOUTH CHOIR @ PRAIRIE!**

Thanks to Barb Park and Carl Wacker, who have agreed to help launch a new opportunity for Prairie youth! We’ve dubbed our group The Prairie Pipers! We need many voices to share our songs, so if you can spare thirty minutes after service twice a month (kid free coffee run for parents!) then please look for the flyers in the foyer, along with practice and performance schedules. Please contact Holly at [prairie\\_uu\\_dre@outlook.com](mailto:prairie_uu_dre@outlook.com) if your student would like to participate or if you have any questions.

### **SUMMER IS COMING!**

And that means time outdoors! RE students will be voting soon on their ideas for the outdoor classroom. This summer will be a time to complete two outdoor projects during our regular Sunday class time. One idea that has been proposed is a rain garden – another idea is a Prairie anniversary labyrinth! Our outdoor space is truly unique when compared to other UU options in Madison. My hope is that we can rally our community and our enthusiasm to begin to develop a space that is inspiring to all of us!

***Students learn about conservation and honor our 7<sup>th</sup> principle through participation in the planning and development of the outdoor classroom – it is also a wonderful opportunity for some of our child-free members to pass on their wisdom and skills to Prairie youth!***

Please consider donating your time, energy and enthusiasm for environmental stewardship to our youth this summer. The time commitment is very small and the reward is very great! Many activities are already planned and materials are already gathered. All we need is your presence and your enthusiasm! It truly is a blessing to work for a community in which Religious Education is as valued and supported as it is here at Prairie. Both our established families and the new families who are joining us every month have expressed what a special and welcoming place this is for kids of all ages. Thanks to everyone who serves our kids!

As always, thank you for your support!

Here’s to a warm and sunny April!

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

Next month we will charge ahead into Retreat! It is ironic that an event which invites us to renew and look to the future is called a Retreat.

In spite of the name, we will not be retreating. We will be laughing and playing and getting to know each other better. We will be preparing ourselves to deal more effectively with the challenges of this life.

I hope we will have a large turnout. If anyone is hesitant to attend because of the cost, please apply for a scholarship. We need your insights.

The program, as always, will contain many alternatives of things to do and many opportunities to interact. You won't be bored, although there will be Board session seeking your input about what Prairie is currently doing and what you think we need to do in the future.

I hope to see you there!

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ANNUAL MEETINGS of our MidAmerica Region and of the Unitarian Universalist Association will be held fairly soon: our Regional Assembly is April 29-May 1, in Minneapolis, and our UUA General Assembly is June 22-26, in Columbus, Ohio. PLEASE NOTE: You will get a break on General Assembly registration fees if you register by April 30th. [Final registration deadline for the regional meeting is April 20; for GA, it is June 26.] Also, Prairie budgets some money to help people with registration fees and possibly transportation and lodging costs. So, don't be shy!! Talk to Phyllis Long or Rev. Sandy or a Board member if you interested in going to either (or both) meetings and would like to take advantage of this money. Also, if we have enough people wanting to go to either annual meeting, we could possibly organize car pooling. For more information, go to [midamericauua.org](http://midamericauua.org) and [uua.org/ga](http://uua.org/ga).

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*Please consider volunteering for and participating in one or more of Prairie's committees or groups. A full list is located on Prairie's website: <http://uuprairie.org/aboutus/#com> or contact Karen Deaton for more information at: [wisconsinkaren@gmail.org](mailto:wisconsinkaren@gmail.org).*