

# Prairie Fire

**December 2018**

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## Prairie Calendar

**(See descriptions of programs below)**

**Sat Dec 1** 9:00 am—**Prairie WOW**—meets in the Annex

**Sun Dec 2** 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**Old Befana**—from the Isthmus: “Local troubadour Ken Lonquist’s nondenominational holiday musical is loosely based on the Italian legend of La Befana, the ‘Christmas Witch,’ who fills shoes with presents and candy, and sweeps away the year’s problems with a broom.” “Old Befana” delivers a message of peace, a message that is needed now more than ever.

11:45 am—**Humanist Union**—meets in the Annex\*

**Thurs Dec 6** 3:00 p.m.—**Prairie Ukulele Group**—meets in the Annex

7:00 pm—**Program Committee**—meets in the Annex

**Fri Dec 7** 6:00 pm—**Board Game Night**—meets in the Meeting House

**Sat Dec 8** 5:00 am—**Men’s Shelter Breakfast**—at Grace Episcopal

**Sun Dec 9** 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**Their Gift To Us**—It is 1568, 450 years ago, and people are preparing gifts for us—**for us**—those who will be alive centuries after they are! You are invited to drop everything and join in the debates of the time. You might be surprised by the intensity of the arguments. You might even think that you are listening to an argument in the year 2018 concerning political and policy matters. Our political debates are eerily similar to those sixteenth century heated discussions and emotional conversations which were actually about religion. You might even wonder if humanity has made much progress at all during the past 450 years. To understand what their gifts to us are and what meaning they have in our everyday lives, we will have to be creative and imaginative and curious.—Rev. Sandy

11:45 am—**Prairie Board**—meets in the Annex

**Sun Dec 16** 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—***The Caring Committee***—by Cheryl Robinson. One of the perks of being a member in Prairie is the work the Caring Committee does on your behalf. The chair of Prairie’s Caring Committee is Cheryl Robinson. She will explain their work and how you can take advantage of what they offer.

10:00 am—***Nifty Gifty***

11:30 am—***Soup Sunday***

12:00 noon—***The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts***—by Maxing Hong Kingston. The December Book Club Selection is the story of a Chinese American woman telling of the Chinese myths, family stories and events of her California childhood that have shaped her identity. It is a sensitive account of growing up female and Chinese American in a California laundry. 204 pages. Recommended by Mary Mullen. The book club is open to everyone. You do not have to have read the book to attend.

**Sun Dec 23** 8:45 am—***Choir Rehearsal***—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—***The Symbol Tree***—This is a Prairie tradition. Bring a memento from the past year to decorate our Symbol Tree. It can represent any milestone from the past year (a picture, a report card, a baby’s footprint, a key, anything that will fit on the tree). Come prepared to share the story behind the decoration. Also, don’t forget we will be collecting our Guest At Your Table boxes.

**Sun Dec 30** 8:45 am—***No Choir Rehearsal Today***

10:00 am—***When You Wish Upon a Star...***nothing much happens, usually, or so it seems. Maybe our usual approach to ringing in a new year is backwards? Perhaps we are putting the proverbial cart before the horse? What if we made a more conscious effort to review our actions during the year that is ending before concentrating on resolutions or thoughts or intentions for the year that is about to begin? This is the challenge of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. On this last Sunday of the year, we will take on that challenge. There might be a small fire or two involved. —Rev. Sandy

\*On Sunday December 2nd, Susan Hagstrom will review Chris Mooney’s findings in ***The Republican Brain: The Science of Why They Deny Science—and Reality***. Potluck lunch at 11:45 am. Program 12:30 to 1:30 pm in the Annex.

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## **Musings From The Minister**

There is a phrase that nags at me, that won’t leave me alone, a little bit like having a tune stuck in your head. The phrase is: strive to be a non-anxious presence (nap). I think that I must have heard those words during my seminary years in the mid-1990s. But a decade before that, I often heard them spoken by my boss when I was the office manager at a large Unitarian Universalist church and he was the minister. More than once, this minister would remind the staff how important it was to be a nap.

Mostly, the staff, myself included, would roll our eyes, wondering just what exactly he meant. What made him think that we were anxious, anyway? Eventually, some of us figured out that we often were indeed anxious with some members of that congregation when we interacted with them... not all of them, certainly, but some. Why? Why would some people cause us to be less than cool, calm, and collected when we were discussing

the business of the congregation and yet we could have the same conversation with someone else who was also a part of that congregation and not feel anxious?

In the first decade of the new century, I spent three days with the Dalai Lama—okay, full disclosure—so did another 300 or so people. It was a three-day intense workshop with that well-known embodiment of non-anxiousness. At the end of our time together, those of us who had made it to the end were initiated into the Buddhist priesthood, sort of. We were asked to take a vow, after which we would become bodhisattvas.

A more or less official definition of a bodhisattva is “a being that compassionately refrains from entering nirvana in order to save others and is worshipped as a deity in Mahayana Buddhism.” I am pretty sure that neither of those descriptions would apply to me at this point in my life.

However, as far as everyday life is concerned, becoming a bodhisattva means that once you’ve taken the vows, you will attempt to live your life mindfully and compassionately, to help others as much as you can, to be kind and caring, to recognize that we are all connected and to act accordingly...while being a nap, of course.

The foundations of becoming a bodhisattva are the same as those required to develop a non-anxious presence: be detached emotionally as much as you can manage to be in complex situations; take a step back and/or a deep breath before speaking or acting; don’t make assumptions, ever; don’t make judgements lightly or without knowing as much as possible about a situation or when under pressure; forget about having all the facts—this is not possible. What is possible and what a nap must strive for is listening to as many sides of a story as you can.

Always try to act from a place of kindness, compassion, gentleness, love. Always keep in mind: it’s not about you. (except when it is!)

Living life as a bodhisattva is an ongoing challenge for me. Sometimes I fail mightily. Sometimes I almost achieve at least a few minutes of calmness and serenity—usually I am somewhere in between the two extremes. Perhaps the important thing—for all of us—is to keep trying...keep trying to figure out how to build a strong, healthy community comprised of eccentric individuals.

Whatever it is that makes you feel less anxious during one of the most anxious times of the year—the holiday season—I hope that you return to it again and again, as needed, in the upcoming weeks. You don’t have to become a bodhisattva to be calm and peaceful during the celebration of peace that we supposedly engage in on December 25th. I strongly suspect, though, that you—and I—do have to try to develop a non-anxious presence in these trying times.

Happy holidays to each and every one of you...Rev. Sandy





***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/about-us/#com>***

***Or contact Chris Porter for more information at:***

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