

# Prairie Fire

January 2019

Editor: Phyllis Long—phyllis.long.9436@gmail.com

Pub. Date: 12/27/2018

Rev. Sandra Ingham, minister—minister@uuprairie.org

Dan Klock, administrator—admin@uuprairie.org

Holly Tellander, DRE—prairie\_uu\_dre@outlook.com

Rachel Long, president—raarlong@gmail.com

Chris Porter, vice-president—richersport@gmail.com

Kathy Converse, treasurer—conversekrtm@gmail.com

Phyllis Long, secretary—phyllis.long.9436@gmail.com



## Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

**Thurs Jan 3** 2:30 pm—**Prairie Ukulele Group**—meets in the Annex

**Fri Jan 4** 6:00 pm—**Board Game Night**

**Sat Jan 5** 5:00 am—**Men's Shelter Breakfast**—at Grace Episcopal

**Roaring Twenties Auction Event**

**Sun Jan 6** 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**Gender Fluidity**—by James Barnard. Mr. Barnard photographed about 40 individuals across the gender spectrum over a three year period, and they shared their stories with him.

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

**Sun Jan 13** 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**John Lewis-Get in the Way**—It has been over 50 years since Rep. John Lewis marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. This video is a tribute to their activism and an inspiration for us to step up, protect and further their gains.

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

**Thurs Jan 17** 2:30 pm—**Ukulele Group**—meets in the Annex

**Sun Jan 20** 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**When You Wish Upon a Star**—This service was originally scheduled for Sunday, December 30, but sometimes Prairie's outstanding Program Committee has to do a bit of shuffling around as schedules change and "life happens". It's never too late to "wish upon a star", though, is it? Or to review our actions during the year that just ended. Before making too many resolutions or good intentions for this brand new year of 2019, Rev. Sandy invites you to take time to consider what we could have done differently in 2018. **NOTE:** Please plan to stay after the service for a conversation about ministry with Rev. Sandy.

11:30 am—**Soup Sunday**

12:00 noon—**Deadly Will**—by Marion Moor Hill. This is the January selection of the Prairie Book Club. History meets mystery in this clever novel in which the American Revolution, murder, and antiques all play a part. In 1789, Nathan Henry, neighbor of Benjamin Franklin, drafts a will modeled on Franklin's, leaving his fortune and possessions to all of his future descendants alive in 200 years. 250 pages. Suggested by Al Nettleton. The book club is open to everyone. You do not have to have read the book to attend. The Book Club will meet in the Annex.

**Mon Jan 21** 6:00 pm—**Dungeons and Dragons and Subversive Threads**—meets in the Annex

**Sun Jan 27** 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**Wild Women of the West**—Five years ago, I told you about some of the Unitarian and Universalist women ministers who went west to fill pulpits that most men were not interested in having—life was too rough on the frontier and the pay was pitiful. It is time to revisit the stories of these women who were active in our faith tradition in the late 1800s and into the beginning of the twentieth century. The “west”, the frontier, at that point in time was here, in the Midwest. The women were *way* ahead of their time. They were gutsy, determined, unbelievably hard-working, largely unknown and unappreciated until, in 1990, a woman named Cynthia Grant Tucker published a book, Prophetic Sisterhood, about them. Join Rev. Sandy on this Sunday and hear an entirely different narrative about the wild west from the one you probably were taught in school.

11:30 am—**Parish Meeting**

**Sun Feb 24** 11:30 am—**Parish Meeting**

**\*Applying humanism to social and political problems**—Kathy Converse will lead the January 6, 2009 Humanist Union meeting. Her topic is “How do we apply humanism to the current social and political problems and attitudes?” Our responsibility as humanists is to be intelligent.

We need to know what is going on in the world and take responsibility for making it a better place in which to live. There is no being or power to which we can shift this task. Our humanist principles can help us in this task, but when everything around us is being impacted in a negative manner, how do we stand strong and not join in this selfsame negativism?

We will meet in Prairie's Annex and start with a potluck lunch at 11:45 am. Kathy's program will follow from 12:30 to 1:30 pm. All are welcome.

---

## **From the President—Rachel Long**

### **Upcoming Winter Parish Meetings**

We have a lot going on in our society, and big decisions to make. The Board has set dates for two winter Parish Meetings, and we request members to attend if at all possible. Both meetings will start at 11:30 am after service, and childcare will be available.

**On January 27, 2019, we will have two items of business. First, we will be voting on whether to grant a 3-month severance package to our departing minister, including salary and benefits, to last through June 30, 2019. Second, the group that has been looking into options for shared space will report to us on what they have found.**

Please look for a separate article with more information about the severance package proposal. We are hoping to minimize what could be awkward and personal discussion by outlining the issues ahead of time, so please read that article and carefully consider.

A small group of members has been communicating with congregations elsewhere that are sharing space, and will be bringing us feedback on their experience. They have also explored opportunities that might be available for us to share space with area congregations. Come and hear what they have discovered.

**On February 24th, we will be voting on whether to proceed with our remodeling as proposed by the remodeling planning group.**

Your Board believes that once we have the feedback from the shared space group, we will have enough information to proceed on a decision about remodeling. We have been working on remodeling plans for years, and costs of doing so will only continue to rise. We have done amazingly well on our capital campaign. Taking the match from our generous anonymous donor into account, at the time of this article we are only about \$63K from our goal of \$507K, demonstrating we have the capacity to go forward if we choose to do so. It's hard to make such a big decision, but let's think carefully, share our thoughts and listen kindly to one another, and then decide whether to take on this project.

Rachel Long

President, Prairie UU Society.

---

## **Musings From The Minister**

By now, most of you know that I am resigning from my position as Prairie's part-time consulting minister. That takes effect on March 31, 2019, which means that we—you, the congregation, and I, the minister—find ourselves in a transition period. More than that, though, I believe that we are about to embark on a three-month experiment. Why do I think this?

Because we have a unique opportunity to take some abstract concepts and put them into action. First of all, we can see how well our Unitarian Universalist principles serve us in a complex situation...and, secondly, we have a rare chance to find out just how powerful and useful love, kindness and compassion are in a muddled, real-world setting.

The Board and I will be working together over the next few months to make the transition go smoothly. We can make this a growth opportunity for everyone as long as we attempt to be as honest and open as we can be about how we got to this point, and then commit to taking what we learn from each other into the future. Will we be able to use what we learn in the next three months to be wiser and more insightful as we experience whatever happens next.

There are some ways that you can help me. I am not necessarily going to give up ministry as I go forward. However, in the interest of not repeating past mistakes and being the best minister that I can be in the future, I welcome your feedback, as long as we strive—to quote myself, “to avoid hard feelings and unkind words and the spread of inaccurate information. In uncertain, troubled times, we need to take good care of each other, being as compassionate and gentle and loving and open-minded as we possibly can be.”

There are many ways that such feedback can be given. I prefer face-to-face in “real” time. To that end, I invite anyone who wishes to do so to stay after the service on Sunday,

January 20, for conversation with me. Remember that the results from the first question of the November survey indicated that you want to continue to have a ministerial presence at Prairie.

I am not primarily concerned with how you answered the question about having me continue as your minister. Hopefully, we are all past that point. I am concerned that we give each other as much constructive criticism and thoughtful “takes” on what went wrong as we possibly can. “Mistakes were made” as some politician famously said (during some scandal or other). For some reason, I am quite fond of that phrase. Those words make me smile, odd as that may sound. Perhaps that is because the phrase—mistakes were made—reminds me, gently, that (1) mistakes are made all the time and (2) all parties in a situation make mistakes and (3) all of us can learn from mistakes made, no matter who made them.

My plan is to offer several times when people can join me for conversation about my ministry in particular, but also about ministry in general, and what ministry means. How can we all improve our ministries, no matter what form they take, and no matter whether the minister is a lay person or a professional?

For me, there is a nice symmetry to the fact that we will begin our transition time and our “mistakes were made” conversations at the same time as a brand-new calendar year begins.

There can be power—the best kind of power—in truly listening to each other and believing that out of the listening will come a deeper understanding of who we are as individuals and what the institution that we call Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society is.

May we all have a Happy and Meaningful New Year!! Rev. Sandy

---

## **Proposed Severance Package for Reverend Sandy**

At a Parish meeting on January 27, 2019, you will be asked to vote on whether Prairie should offer a severance package to our minister Sandy Ingham. The proposal is as follows:

*Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society (Prairie) will provide Reverend Sandra Ingham a severance package at the end of her ministerial relationship with Prairie, March 31, 2019, by continuing her current salary and benefits through June 30, 2019.*

Prairie has not paid severance to our previous ministers, all of whom have chosen to leave on their own schedule. According to our District ministerial transition representative, Unitarian Universalist ministers generally only receive severance when there is a negotiated resignation. The justification for severance is that congregations don't pay into the unemployment system, and ministers cannot take advantage of unemployment. However the choice to pay severance resides with each congregation.

The guideline we were given for severance pay to departing UU ministers is one month of

pay for each year of work. If we were to follow this guideline for Sandy, we would be covering her salary and benefits for the next six months. We are parting ways amicably, and both Sandy and the Board have agreed that she will continue to serve our congregation as its minister for three of those six months. As of the time of this article, the Board is still considering with Sandy how she will best use her remaining time with us both for the congregation's benefit and her own.

In response to the recent survey, many members of our congregation expressed the preference for Sandy to remain our minister. A severance package would be a demonstration of care and respect for Sandy and, hopefully, promote goodwill and unity within the congregation. Ministerial jobs are not widely available and take time to arrange. Ministerial changes often occur in the summer months. This package would provide Sandy some income security during this transition.

Prairie's 2019 budget includes pay and benefits for a minister for the entire year. The Board has decided not to immediately begin recruiting for another minister, but rather to allow time for discussion and reflection on what we are seeking in a minister. We intend to arrange for at least monthly guest UU ministers to speak at Prairie. There is enough money available to cover both the proposed severance package and to cover the cost of these speakers.

Thanks for your thoughtful and caring consideration.

Rachel Long, President

Chris Porter, Vice President

***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](http://uuprairie.org/about-us/#com)***

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

***[richersport@gmail.com](mailto:richersport@gmail.com)***