

Prairie Fire

February 2019

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Pub. Date: 01/27/2019

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Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

Fri Feb 1 6:00 pm—**Board Game Night**

Sat Feb 2 5:00 am—**Men's Shelter Breakfast**

9:00 am—**WOW Women's Group**

Sun Feb 3 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**Structural Justice**—by Pagen Small. One of the biggest challenges in social justice is defining justice. What is justice and how do we know when we have achieved it? This week, we'll talk about the concept of structural justice, what it means, and how it can be used as a framework for solving societal problems and eliminating oppression.

11:45—**Humanist Conscientious Objector**—Randy Converse will talk to the Humanist Union about *How Humanism, not Christianity, Gave Me the Foundation for My Commitment to Pacifism*. He will tell us about how he based his conscientious objector application on humanism. He will also speak about how humanism has informed his pacifist responses to World War II, as a "good war," and to the civil wars raging in the Middle East. We will meet in Prairie's Annex and start with a potluck lunch at 11:45 am. Randy's program will follow from 12:30 to 1:30 pm. All are welcome.

Feb 10 8:45 am—**Choir Rehearsal**—meets in the Annex

10:00 am—**An Inclusive Perspective on islam**—(The lowercase islam is intentional) by Katrina Daly. Katrina is a Prairie member and a professor at UW-Madison who has been a UU since 2005 and a muslim since 2009. Her talk will draw on both her personal experience and her ethnographic research in muslim communities in East Africa, North America, and online.

11:15 or immediately following the service—**Discussion group**—meets to share information and ideas about Prairie remodeling.

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

Feb 15 6:00 pm—**Dungeons and Dragons and Subversive Threads**

Feb 17

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

10:00 am—**Valentine Stories**—by Andy Garst. Here is an opportunity to get to know your fellow Prairie members better. Andy is curious how you met your Valentine and will lead a service where we share our how we met stories.

11:15 or immediately following the service—**Discussion group**—meets to share information and ideas about Prairie remodeling.

11:15—**Soup Sunday**

12:00 noon—**Becoming**—by Michelle Obama is the book club selection for this month. In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America—the first African-American to serve in that role. 426 pages. Recommended by Mary Mullen.

Feb 24

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

10:00 am—**Inquiring Humanists Want to Know**—Humanists probably want to know many things. Here are some questions that Rev. Sandy will pose on this particular Sunday morning. How relevant is the original “Humanist Manifesto” now that humans have made it to the twenty-first century? Do humanists still make up a large percentage of Unitarian Universalist congregations? Are there more secular humanists than religious humanists? Does it matter? Join us on this Sunday for what Rev. Sandy hopes will be a lively discussion following her remarks.

From the President—Rachel Long

On February 24th, 2019 we will have a Parish Meeting, at which we have scheduled a momentous vote on whether to go forward with our proposed remodeling plan. We have been discussing remodeling our building for many years. Two years ago, the Board formed a Remodeling Planning Group, which obtained input from Prairie members with a wide range of points of view and worked with an architect to consider many issues and possible plans. Before finalizing plans, the group decided to get pledges and make sure the congregation was able and willing to fund the project. They got a rough estimate from a builder, and set a fund raising goal of \$275,000. They were surprised to find that they rapidly raised over \$300,000, more than their initial goal.

The group then got down to planning in earnest, and considered making changes that would address problems they hadn't initially included, such as changing the downstairs entrance to reduce recurrent flooding, and changing doorway widths in the RE space to be in compliance with current ADA requirements. The group presented their more detailed proposal with a more thorough estimate from the builder, price tag \$507,000. The congregation initially suffered from “sticker shock,” but responded by rapidly increasing fund raising. Including an extremely generous match from an anonymous donor, we have now raised all but 13% of the new goal, and need to raise only \$67,000 in order to proceed without any debt or dipping into reserves, an amazing achievement for such a big project.

There has been a lot of discussion of all the potential benefits of remodeling. Just some of the crucial improvements include living our beliefs in being welcoming (wheelchair and walker accessible bathrooms, doorways, and piano; gender neutral bathrooms; improved sound system for hearing impaired folks,) and more “green” dining by having better dish-washing capability. We would improve opportunity for fellowship by expanding the foyer,

and improving the quality of our services through better technology (hanging projector and screen, up-to-date sound system) and improve our traffic flow and aesthetics to be more inviting to guests. And we need to finally remove the asbestos ceiling.

There is of course dissent, and all voices should be heard. Please check the Prairie calendar online or Prairie News for discussion sessions scheduled in February prior to the Parish Meeting. Your Board has voted in favor of proceeding with remodeling, and it's time for the congregation to vote. Please participate! Prices for construction in Madison keep rising, and if we are going forward, we should get going!

Rachel Long

President, Prairie UU Society.

Musings From The Minister

On a recent Sunday morning, I used a reading by Greta Crosby about winter. Here is part of that reading. “Let us not wish away the winter. It is a season to itself, not simply the way to spring...Winter is a table set with ice and starlight. Winter dark tends to warm light: fire and candle; winter cold to hugs and huddles;...winter danger to visions, plans, and common endeavoring—and the zest of narrow escapes; winter tedium to merrymaking.

She closes with this sentence: “Let us therefore praise winter, rich in beauty, challenge, and *pregnant negativities*.” [my emphasis]

After having very little that resembled winter in November, December, and half of January, we are now being assaulted with the full force of an old-fashioned Wisconsin winter—significant snow and, as I write this column, the forecast for the next week is “record setting” cold...And, I am more than ready to “wish away the winter,” brief as it has been.

I fuss and I fume and I fret—I fret big time. What if the car won't start? What if I get stuck in the snow? What if I fall on the ice? What will I do physically if there is too much snow and ice to do my usual brisk walking? What if the heating bill becomes unmanageable? What if...what if...what if???

Every year, I say over and over again, “I hate winter!” Yet, every year, there it is—winter—just waiting to get me, to pounce on me. Never mind that it pounces on everyone pretty much equally—with the major exception of those homeless folks who somehow persevere through the winter months.

In the days following that Sunday when I used Crosby's words about winter, words that I had used other winters, I was fascinated by that phrase of hers—pregnant negativities—in a way that I hadn't been in previous winters. What exactly is a pregnant negativity? I am not sure, but I am challenged by those words. I have reached some conclusions that just might be useful to my survival of yet another Wisconsin winter.

And then, I remembered something else that was trying to surface from somewhere in my brain. *Acceptance*. Getting to a place of acceptance. Oddly, I did not come across this concept of approaching difficult times through any deep intellectual research. No, I read it in a mystery book not long ago (and yes, I find mystery books to be marvelous escape mechanisms).

One has to be careful with adopting an attitude of acceptance. There is a fine line, I think, between accepting what is and rebelling against what is when resistance or push back is more appropriate. But for now, I am going to try to be more accepting of winter because there is only one way that I know of to escape it (besides staying in bed all day)—and that is to become a snowbird. I am not anywhere near being able to do that, though.

May you be successful in discerning the difference between acceptance and capitulation. May you find beauty and challenge in the winter days, even if you are not ready to praise those days. May you ponder the possibility of discovering pregnant negativities between now and the arrival of spring. And may this winter be a safe one for us all!

Rev. Sandy

Announcement

The next *Conversation with the Minister* will be after the service on Sunday, February 17. Please join Rev. Sandy at a table during this Soup Sunday time. Between now and the end of March, Rev. Sandy will continue to offer as many opportunities as possible for you to talk with her about her ministry, in particular, but also about ministry in general, and what you expect from a minister. Remember you are strongly encouraged to give your feedback via the conversations or in one-on-one discussions and/or through letters, on paper or in an email. These opportunities to share information about ministry will, hopefully, be useful to both the Prairie community and to Rev. Sandy, as we move on to other ministries.

January 27 Parish Meeting Results

Forty-two members were present for our Parish Meeting 1/27/19. We voted overwhelmingly in favor of the proposed severance package for our minister, Rev. Sandy Ingham. Barb Chatterton presented a summary of the many hours of work our shared space working group has spent exploring options. We set dates for informal discussion on our space in advance of the 2/24/19 Parish Meeting at which we will vote on remodeling. Join us on Sundays 2/10 or 2/17, right after service, in the back of the main meeting room to continue the conversation about the big decision facing us.

Rachel Long

President, Prairie UU Society

History Books Almost Done: Time to decide whether you want yours in color

Hold onto your hats, Prairie folks. Believe it or not, your intrepid and dogged History Committee now has final copies of *Volume 1* of the Prairie history squirreled away in the administrator's office. It has one fabulous color copy of that same volume for all to see every Sunday. And finally, the proofreaders are hard at work proofing Volume 2, while Vice President Chris Porter is trying out new software to make the index.

Now is the time to take a look at these books and decide whether you want to purchase a set of the books in black and white or whether to spend your nest egg on that out-of-this world color set.

We are offering the black and white set for \$37. Lest you think that's a high price, be aware that the two volumes together make up well over 900 pages. (Skip the next paragraph if you are dying to find out the price of the color set.)

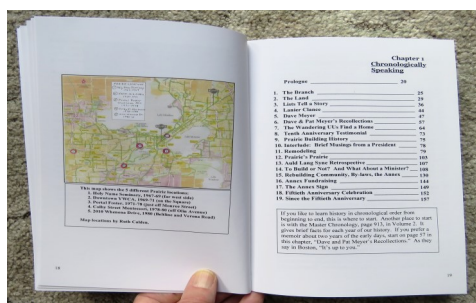
These books, whether black and white or in full color, contain something for everybody: history (sometimes academic-like), social history, numerous photos, scans of historical documents, stories and memoirs, bios and interviews, poems, some lists, charts, and tables, and names—hundreds of names, maybe even yours (or yours quite a few times). There's a list of our leaders over the past 50 years—355 in total. The number of names in captions and scans alone is 550! An index at the end of Volume 2 will help you find the names in the text, captions, and scans of both books. For those who prefer to get the capsule view of Prairie's history, there's also a Chronology with the major leaders and events of every church year, 1967-2018.

Are you wondering if you can afford the color version of these books? Be ready for sticker shock: \$144 for the color set. For some of us who've put four years of hard work into producing these books and those with extra cash in our pockets, color is what we have to have. Sorry to say, it's cash in advance for these: At that cost, Prairie can't afford to have any extra inventory lying around. (We will have 120 sets of the black and white version, so no need to order them ahead.)

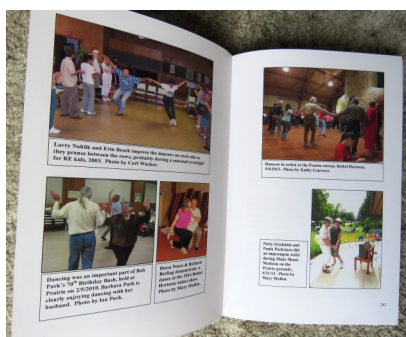
SO...the message of this article is, if you are wanting that amazing color set, please let History Committee Chair Mary Mullen know right away. We will only order those for which we have payment in advance. Make out your check to Prairie with a memo that it's for the color history books. We prefer you hand over or send your check to Mary so there's no chance she misses your order. (She'll turn it over to Prairie.)

In April or May we plan to hold a book-launch event, a Saturday evening with entertaining readings from the book, with wine, non-alcoholic beverages, and cheese to keep your energy up, and the opportunity to pick up your very own personal set of books.

Up, up and away!!!!



Chapter 1



Dancing



Chapter 7
In the community

Mary—A Poem by Kathy Converse

*What thoughts flow through this tousled gray head,
that causes the frown on her face,
thoughts of today,
or remembering them?
do I fit into these thoughts,
my touch different,
my words more tender,
my “mom” received differently than “their” Mary?
or am I truly a forgotten daughter,
caring without thanks,
without hugs and kisses.
This isn’t my mother anymore,
this cranky, ungrateful woman, who
doesn’t appreciate my time and efforts,
doesn’t recognize my accomplishments,
doesn’t grandmother my children.
The mother I knew has faded.
I am caring for this woman,
Mary,
usually a total stranger to me
But still...in those unexpected, fleeting moments,
a certain look,
a hand gesture,
maybe a word or two,
That brings realization and grips my heart,
wait,
This mary is my mother.
I kiss her soft wrinkled cheek,
smooth her tousled hair,
hold the thin, veined hand,
With a tear in my eye,
I remain devoted,
forever bound,
by forces started 53 years ago.*

