

# Prairie Fire

April 2019



**A real Prairie fire:  
First burn of the season  
at the Arboretum**  
Photo by **Karen Deaton**

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# April Calendar

Please see the website for detailed descriptions

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## Thurs 4 April

- ▶ 2:30p Ukelele Group – Annex
- ▶ 7p Program Committee

## Friday 5 April

- ▶ 6p Game Night – Meeting House

## Saturday 6 April

- ▶ 5a Men's Shelter
- ▶ 9a Prairie WOW – Annex

## Sunday 7 April

- ▶ 8:45a Choir Practice – Annex
- ▶ 10a Service: A Tribute to Mary Oliver
- ▶ 11:45a Humanist Union – Annex

## Thursday 11 April

- ▶ 7p Ukelele Group – Annex

## Sunday 14 April

- ▶ 8:45a Choir Practice – Annex
- ▶ 10a Service
- ▶ 11a Bakery Sunday
- ▶ 11:45a Board Meeting

## Thursday 18 April

- ▶ 2:30p Ukelele Group – Annex

## Friday 19 April

- ▶ 6p DND and Subversive Threads – Annex

## Sunday 21 April

- ▶ 8:45a Choir Practice – Annex
- ▶ 10a Service
- ▶ 11:30a Soup Sunday
- ▶ 12p Book Club (*Men We Reaped* by Jesmyn Ward) – Annex

## Thursday 25 April

- ▶ 7p Ukelele Group – Annex
- ▶ Saturday 27 April
- ▶ 7p History Committee Book Launch Party

## Sunday 28 April

- ▶ 8:45a Choir Practice – Annex
- ▶ 10a Service

# Bylaws Changes Proposed

Rachel Long, President

Your Board has spent time over the last several months reviewing our Bylaws (kudos especially to Chris Porter and Kathy Converse!) and we have a list of changes we would like to propose. These changes will be voted on at the Spring Parish Meeting 5/19/19. In early April, we will be posting a list of proposals in the back of the meeting room, sending them out on Prairie News, and mailing them to those members who have requested to receive information by mail. Most of these proposed changes are clarifications, and don't have much impact on how we govern ourselves. However, here is a quick summary of the important proposals, by section.

- ▶ 6.5 Currently the Treasurer is solely responsible for assuring “safe receipt and management of all money and property of the Society,” but best practice (and what we currently do) is to have 2 individuals share responsibility, and our proposal adds the Finance Chair to share this responsibility.
- ▶ 7.6 We propose establishing a quorum of 50% present for Board meetings, whereas currently there is no quorum specified.
- ▶ 10.x Would remove names of specific committees that are appointed by the Board, moves these to policies and procedures so we have more flexibility with committees in the future.
- ▶ 12.x Specifies and clarifies expectations for called vs. contract ministers, minister search committee, evaluation of minister's performance by the Board, and termination of minister including expectations for notice and severance. Changes lay minister description to match our current procedure.
- ▶ 15.1 Clarifies that rather than being able to amend the bylaws on the spot at a Parish Meeting, the previously published text will be what is voted on. If the congregation wants changes to the proposed text, a revised proposal would need to be brought to a future parish meeting for a vote.

Watch for announcements with opportunities to discuss these proposals in detail. And thanks in advance for your participation in our democratic process!

# Greetings from RE - maybe for the last time!

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**Holly Tellander, MA Ed., Director of Religious Education\***

Don't panic! Religious Education (RE) at Prairie isn't going anywhere! And neither is your Director of Religious Education (DRE), although new acronyms may be in our future. As the saying goes "change is inevitable ... except from a vending machine." Recently the RE committee and I have been discussing the term "religious education." In actuality, the term doesn't fully reflect what happens in any UU youth program and, in fact, some have said that it can be misleading—especially to folks who are unfamiliar with UU principles, perspective or practices. We feel it is perhaps time for a broader discussion with parents and families as well as the larger congregation about the potential for a new name that might more accurately reflect our program goals and objectives.

The UUA uses the umbrella term "religious education" to describe everything that takes place in a UU youth program—essentially a three part focus: (1) building an awareness of Unitarian Universalist identity (the principles and sources help provide this framework); (2) developing a literacy of the world's faith traditions; and (3) providing opportunities for engaging in age-appropriate social justice endeavors.

Here at Prairie we have added in a fourth program component: (4) community learning. This aspect of our programming encourages us to continue to evolve towards a more student-centered learning model. Some essential components of which are: multi-age learning environments, the building of self-awareness, self-management and self-regulation skills, practice with varied communication strategies and prioritizing student-choice learning opportunities.

Additionally, over the past few years we have grown to be the only UU church to offer all levels of Our Whole Lives (OWL) education from kindergarten through high school in the Dane County area. We feel this programming is vital to a healthy society and provides essential resources and experiences for kids and families to develop their own self-advocacy toolkits

in regards to their gender and sexual identities. We plan to continue to develop resources and facilitators to bring this programming to our community and make this a commitment of our program.

With all of the above in mind, we have come to feel it might be more inclusive and clear to folks who have yet to give us a try if we were to change the name of our program to more accurately reflect the totality—and universality—of how we aim to support students and their families, and by extension our wider communities. We have decided to put forth a few sample names and allow all interested parties to comment, question, or offer alternatives. The possible names suggested so far by RE Committee members are:

- ▶ Sunday School of Life
- ▶ Life School
- ▶ Community Learning Program

Please share your ideas! Direct your feedback to both the Director of Religious Education Holly Tellander ([dre@uuprairie.org](mailto:dre@uuprairie.org)) and the RE Committee Chair Karen Deaton ([re-committee@uuprairie.org](mailto:re-committee@uuprairie.org)). In order to ensure that we give folks adequate time to provide feedback, and also that we have time to make program changes in time for the start of our RE year in the fall, we would greatly appreciate all feedback be submitted no later than our Transitions Service on 2 June 2019. We will continue to communicate throughout this process of change, as well as to offer reminders of deadlines for submitting thoughts or questions.

As Director of this programming at Prairie, I strive always to be responsive, inclusive and progressive in the way our program grows and changes. I appreciate your support as always, and feel grateful to be a part of a society that is committed to doing good work in the world and continuing to grow in our understanding of what it means to be a community.

# Gala History Book Launch Party Set for 27 April

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## Mary Mullen

Put it on your calendar now: the fabulous Prairie History Book release party, scheduled for 7 pm on Saturday, 27 April at Prairie. It's a time to enjoy the fruits of the Prairie History Committee's labor, which has resulted in a two-volume history: *Prairie UU Society: 50 Years in the Life of a Congregation, 1967-2017, Volumes 1 and 2*.

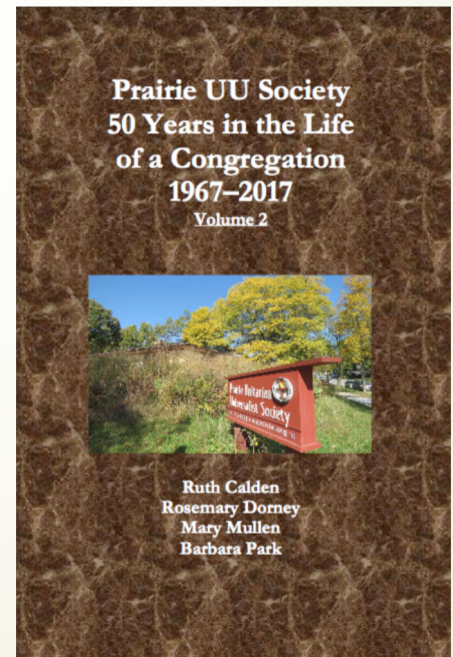
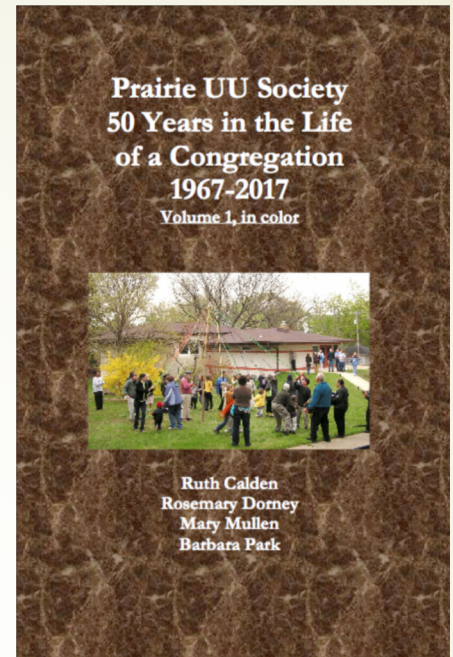
What's in store? Three things.

- ▶ Food and drink. Wine, hot cider, cheese, and cookies for certain. (Feel free to contact Barbara Park if you want to bring something.)
- ▶ An entertaining program of short readings from the books. Many voices will make this program seem all too short, but we hope it will whet your appetite.
- ▶ The opportunity to pick up a set of books. If you've ordered and paid for the color or black and white version of the set, that set can go into your hands the moment you hit the door. If you have committed to buy a set in black and white but haven't paid for it yet, we'll take your payment and give you the books after the program.

The Cost of black and white version is \$37. For that, you get 966 pages of fascinating material: history, articles, stories, interviews, memories, poetry, hundreds of photos and scans, a few tables and charts, a list of all our designated leaders, a year-by-year chronology, and an index.

If you haven't yet officially told the History Committee that you want a set, do it now. We'll have about 100 copies of the black and white set on hand that night. For more information on the books, consult the History Committee page on Prairie's website, <https://uuprairie.org/about/committees/history-committee/>.

If you missed the deadline to order the \$144 color set, call History Committee Chair Mary Mullen for details (608) 298-0843.



# Member Spotlight

## Get to know Molly Plunkett



- ▶ Where did you grow up? When and why did you move to Madison?

I grew up in Saint Paul, Minnesota. I moved to Madison in 1972 after living briefly in NYC to attend graduate school in what is now the Counseling Psychology program.

- ▶ What brought you to Prairie?

I knew about Prairie from my neighbors Norma and Mike Briggs who were among its founders. I had been attending FUS but especially liked the lay led programs that FUS used to have in the summers when the minister was not preaching. When Peter and I married we decided that Prairie might be a "better fit." I wanted a spiritual community for my school age children and for myself but not a dogmatic religion like the Catholic faith I was raised in.

- ▶ Do you remember your first impressions of Prairie? What has changed since then? What has stayed the same?

I remember Prairie feeling vibrant and welcoming. We joined a play reading group one night organized by Pat Watkins (now gone). We played Pictionary and charades with Doleta Chapru and Warren Hagstrom. I liked the informality of the congregation and variety of services and music and musicians. Still do. Many wonderful Prairie people we first knew are gone: dead, moved but there are new wonderful people and it still seems vibrant to me with the Humanist Group and Games Nights.

- ▶ What do you do with your time when you're not at Prairie?

I try mightily to exercise, practice one of my many musical instruments, serve on four boards (two connected with Prairie: Allied Partners and Allied Wellness Center), see our two grandkids, make pottery, grow bonsai plants (*grow* is stated optimistically), tend my chickens and dust my antique clock collection.

- ▶ What is something even long-time Prairie members might be surprised to learn about you?

I don't know what would be surprising! I accosted Robin Vos at the Inaugural Ball for his nerve in attending an event celebrating the governor whose powers he had worked so diligently to reduce in the special session.

# Hospitality Committee Requests

## Barbara Chatterton

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I would like to ask for any suitable donations of a gently used stove or refrigerator in good shape to be used in the new kitchen remodel. If you know someone who is updating their own kitchen, or someone replacing either of these appliances please let me know and, with approval, it may be installed in the Prairie kitchen.

## Get to Know New Members

### Hannah and Benjamin Van Thiel

The Van Thiels met when Benjamin was living with Hannah's brother in Oakland for a year serving a poor community and teaching kids how to fix bikes. "Once I saw Benjo," Hannah writes, "it was love at first sight!" The two are planning on starting a family soon and were happy to find a community where the adults are a part of the lives of the kids at Prairie.

"We both were raised in Christian churches and homes, and we both felt in our adulthood that we did not actually believe that so many of the people we loved and met were going to hell. We love that Prairie Sunday service gives time to reflect each week and is a small community that is like-minded in its values."

When the Van Thiels are not at Prairie, they love to spend time hiking and playing with their dog, Cash. They love to cross-country ski, walk their canoe across the street to Lake Wingra, and spend time in nature. They love to keep chickens, garden in the summer, travel, and spend time with each other. "We are excited to be a part of Prairie!"



# And More New Members!

## Renee and Jason Deschard

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Jason is a computer programmer at UW Madison for their Human Resources system, PeopleSoft, and Renee is a former public elementary school librarian who now tries to keep up with their active two-year-old daughter.

Renee and Jason wanted to join a community of similar minded people and found that at Prairie. "We really enjoy how welcoming everyone was and is," Renee says. They are looking forward to getting involved in Prairie activities although that will likely be on hold for a few months after Baby #2 arrives (probably by the time you read this). Renee will be coming on as the new *Prairie Fire* editor beginning with the May issue.

When the Deschards are not at Prairie, Jason enjoys working on techy side projects like developing games or apps. Renee enjoys going to dance practice and designing/carrying out home improvement projects.

How did they meet? "Jason & I met the new-fashioned way—online!" Renee says. "We had a four-hour coffee date and by the end, I pretty much knew he was the one (it took him a bit longer to come to the same conclusion," she says with a smile.



On the web: [uuprairie.org](http://uuprairie.org)



# Social Action Committee

## Communique

### Molly Plunkett and Pam Gates

#### ▶ Allied Partners Update

Allied Partners is an organization to which Prairie has belonged for many years. One of the groups in the neighborhood that it supports is the Allied Wellness Center - a holistic center which provides health related information, blood pressure checks through the services of volunteer nurses, assistive devices, personal items pantry and direct assistance for gas vouchers and bus passes. The staff person from the center, Gloria Manadier Farr, spoke at Prairie about the work they do. The center has little financial support other than donations from churches and grants, including one city grant that funds the half-time staff person. Molly Plunkett and another Allied Wellness Center board member prepared a grant application that awarded the center \$3000 in February.

#### ▶ New MOSES project!

About twenty people, including Peter Anderson and Pam Gates from Prairie, gathered at First Unitarian (FUS) on March 9 to help present the cases of longtime prisoners, people who have done their time and completed their obligatory classes, to Governor Evers' soon-to-be-appointed (we trust) Parole Commission. We answered letters from prisoners and/or put their information into a spreadsheet, so the new commission could easily evaluate their readiness for release. This is a tangible way we can make a difference and help empty our prisons of people who shouldn't be there anymore.

We focused on Wisconsin's approximately 3,000 prisoners sentenced before 2000, when parole was an expected portion of every sentence; our truth-in-sentencing law, passed in 1999, required that every sentence be served in full, which wasn't the expectation of sentencing judges before then. Before 1999, parole could be granted after 25% of a sentence had been served; it was essentially required after 60%.

We anticipate more such work parties, probably on the second Saturday morning of each month; the next one will take place Saturday morning, April 13, at First Unitarian Society. Watch Prairie Views or News for updates. More help is always welcome!

#### ▶ Madison Action Day, March 26

This biennial event gathered WISDOM members from all over the state to network, strategize, and meet with legislators about state budget issues, especially those involving the corrections system in some way. In the past, close to 1,000 people have assembled for this event.

#### ▶ Other MOSES news

MOSES holds informative events once every month or two and publishes a yearbook and a bimonthly newsletter, which are generally available in Prairie's lobby for anyone to pick up. We try to forward announcements of MOSES events to Prairie News and Views. For more information about MOSES, contact Pam Gates, Prairie's MOSES representative, at [pml.gts@gmail.com](mailto:pml.gts@gmail.com).

## Humanist Union: Origins of Religion

### Bob Park

On Sunday, April 7, the Humanist Union will hear a presentation by Nick Schweitzer and Pat Bober on the book *Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods: Early Humans and the Origins of Religion* by E. Fuller Torrey. See the book review at [Inquisitive Biologist](#). We'll meet in the Annex at 11:45 am for a potluck lunch followed by the program from 12:15 to 1:15 pm. All are welcome.

## Garden Plots Available in Prairie's Neighborhood

### Mary Mullen

- ▶ Community garden plots are available in Marlborough Park, hardly more than a stone's throw from Prairie.
- ▶ The garden is multi-cultural. It's a good place to practice Spanish because 2/3 of the gardeners are Latino. Native English speakers make up about 25% of the gardeners, and the remainder come originally from southeast Asia and several other countries including Russia.
- ▶ For more information and to obtain a registration form, contact Prairie member Mary Mullen. (See a Prairie directory.) Rental fees depend on income and number in the household.

## Prairie Contacts

Rachel Long, President—[president@uuprairie.org](mailto:president@uuprairie.org)

Dan Klock, Administrator—[admin@uuprairie.org](mailto:admin@uuprairie.org)

Holly Tellander, DRE—[dre@uuprairie.org](mailto:dre@uuprairie.org)

Renee Deschard, Prairie Fire Editor (Beginning May 2019) —  
[prairiefire@uuprairie.org](mailto:prairiefire@uuprairie.org)

Please see our website for other contacts, including board members and committee chairs.