

March
2021

Prairie Fire



Your Interiors committee has begun the process to install the Prairie grass sculpture (made from wood). Here is a quick peek. John Gernandt, Suzanne Gernandt, John Wunderlin and Gene Kain are the artists involved. It won't be long now!

Prairie Contacts

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Please see www.uuprairie.org for other contacts, including board members and committee chairs.

Table of Contents

Calendar	2
Study Groups in March	3
DRE Job Posting	4
Prairie RE: March Edition	4
Breakout Groups: Serendipitous but Fun	5
MidAmerica History & Heritage Committee	6 & 7
News from MOSES	7
Member Spotlight: Chris Porter	8

March Calendar*

Please see www.uuprairie.org for detailed descriptions & public event links

**All events take place online via Zoom*

2

Tuesday 2

- 4:30 Beginner D&D (every Tuesday)
- 7p Trivia (1st & 3rd Tuesday)

Thursday 4 (every Thursday)

- 6:30p Thursday Fun Night

Friday 5 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Advanced D&D

Saturday 6

- 10a Prairie WOW

Sunday 7

- 10a Service: "Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence 101" by Zoe Heitzinger (DIAS)
- 11a Virtual Coffee Hour (every Sunday)

Monday 8

- 7p Study Group (2nd & 4th Mondays)

Tuesday 9

- 6p Board Meeting

Thursday 11 (2nd & 4th Thursday)

- 7pm Prairie Sing Along

Sunday 14

- 10a Service: TBA

Sunday 21

- 10a Service: "Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary" by Renia Pruchnicki

Saturday 27

- 10a Creativity & Connection

Sunday 28

- 10a Service: "Restranging the Bead" by Michael Eselun



Study Group in March

Rachel Long, President

3

We will have our second discussion on ***Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates**. Among many accolades, David Remnick of The New Yorker called the book “an impassioned letter to his teenage son—a letter both loving and full of a parent’s dread—counseling him on the history of American violence against the black body, the young African-American’s extreme vulnerability to wrongful arrest, police violence, and disproportionate incarceration.”

Later in the month, we will begin discussion of the 2021 UU Common ***Read Breathe - A Letter to My Sons* by Imani Perry**. *Breathe* reflects on race, racism, and the hope that one’s child will be wholly known and valued by society. It is “an unforgettable lesson in Black resistance and resilience.” The New York Times calls *Breathe* “an elixir of history, ancestry and compassion, which, together, become instruction...a parent’s unflinching demand, born of inherited trauma and love, for her children’s right simply to be possible.”

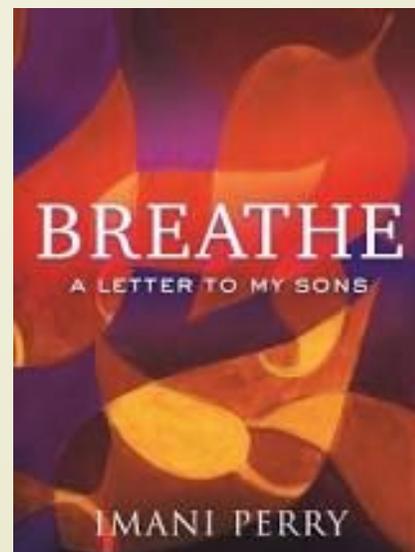
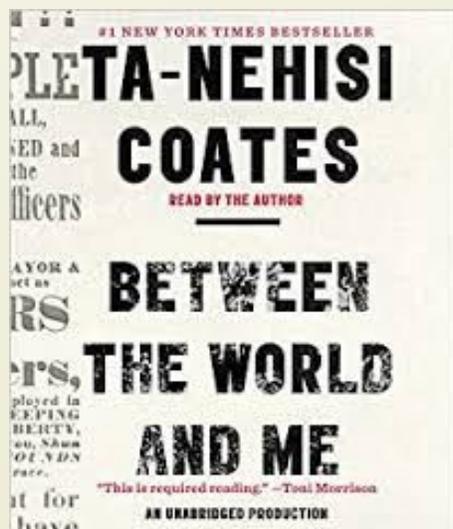
Upcoming Study Group calendar:

March 8 - ***Between the World and Me part 2***, led by Phyllis Long

March 22 - ***Breathe - A Letter to My Sons part 1***, led by Rachel Long

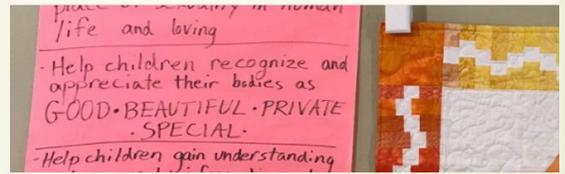
April 12 - ***Breathe - A Letter to My Sons part 2***, led by Rachel Long

Study Group meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 7-8:30 pm (with the exception of 1/25/21.) You are welcome to participate whether or not you have read the book. Below is the upcoming schedule. The link will be on the main web page. Join us!



DRE Job Posting

Carl Wacker, DRE Search Committee



4

Prairie UU is searching for a half-time Religious Exploration Director (DRE) who will oversee educational programming for the children of Prairie. We're looking for someone with significant experience in education, child care, or a related field, who knows how to design education programs that are responsive to the needs of each child. A strong candidate will be comfortable with UU principles and social justice issues, and can communicate them in age-appropriate ways.

You can help by spreading the word and encouraging interested persons to apply. Please share this link widely: [Prairie DRE Job Announcement](#). Application deadline is April 1st. The starting date is flexible and will be "mutually agreed upon" when we hire.

It's tough recruiting in the middle of a pandemic, but if we all work together we can find an outstanding individual to be our next DRE!

Prairie RE: March Edition

Karen Deaton, Religious Exploration (RE) Committee Chair

HAWKS - Our sexuality education program for young teens (inspired by OWL but delivered online) is continuing. Every Sunday, we share information and provide a framework for sound decision making. Katrina and I are co-facilitators, while Pageen Small and Holly Tellander have helped with developing our activities. Our 13-week program will conclude on March 28. A few weeks ago, we welcomed a set of visitors with diverse LGBTQIA+ identities to share experiences and advice with our group. It was a powerful experience that helped us all develop deeper understanding of gender, orientation, and the complex intersection of our various identities. Katrina and I are planning a similar panel discussion for a Sunday morning program.

D&D - Two D&D campaigns provide adventure every week.

Thursday Fun Night - Fun night is more fun all the time as we learn what activities work well online for our young participants. Sometimes we have half a dozen or more kids, and several adults. Carl, Paula, Kathy, Randy, and I are regular attendees and fun leaders. It's fun to build relationships with our youngest Prairie friends. They're growing up before our eyes! All are welcome to join us.

Roblox - Roblox for 11 and up and Minecraft for 7 and up are getting organized and getting started. Do you have Minecraft experience? I have questions for you.



Let me know if you're interested in participating in any of these programs, or if you have questions or suggestions.

Breakout Groups: Serendipitous But Fun

Mary Mullen

5

Looking for a deeper connection to Prairie than you can get just by attending the Sunday service on Zoom? One way is to hang out after the service to join the "coffee hour" via breakout groups. You always take your chances when you do so: the Zoom host designates the number of breakout groups, but Zoom decides randomly who is part of each group. It's serendipity.

Here's an example from February 7. One group this time consisted of Rick Ruecking, Nancy Schraufnagel, Robin Proud, Patty Stockdale, and Mary Mullen. At one point Rick brought out a baseball hat he'd just purchased. It had an embroidered opossum on it, rat tail and all. That prompted Nancy to get a hat of hers, one that said Bear Capital of the World. That's some place in Wisconsin.

Patty Stockdale was not to be outdone. She and Mary are part of the First Universalist Church virtual choir in Minneapolis (as is Morris Sadicario), and the current piece they are working on is "Concerto for Singing Chickens and Piano." Patty put on her chicken hat, fashioned from yellow construction paper and a red crepe paper beak. Of course Mary had to show hers, a folk-art version made from her bike helmet with yellow work gloves stuck in the holes to form the chicken's comb.

At this point Mary begged all to keep their hats on for a screenshot. Robin then joined the fun and quickly found a hat with a Welsh theme. We all had a good laugh.

Sunday breakouts can be anything you make them: show and tell like this one, serious discussion of the Sunday service topic, a chance to share personal concerns or plans, and more.



MidAmerica History and Heritage Committee Collects Church Adaptations During Pandemic

6

Mary Mullen

It's coming on a year of the COVID-19 pandemic. How have UU congregations adapted to the reality of the novel coronavirus? Turns out, in many different ways.

As a member of the committee, it was my assignment to turn Prairie's adaptations into a short written report. The written part is done, but for our archives, my plan is to include photos that illustrate some of the many things we've done. Please, if you took photos of any of the activities below, we'd love to have digital copies.

This is just a short and possibly not a complete list of what Prairie has done to adapt.

- Began Zoom service - a combination of 1. Six Saturday Prairie services 2. Three Sunday Prairie services 3. Five joint Sunday services with First Unitarian Society and James Reeb Congregation followed by Prairie Virtual Coffee Hours. We settled into our regular Sunday, 10 am slot, starting in June 2020. Being virtual has allowed us to bring in speakers from far away at less cost to Prairie than if they were in person. Sadly, our attendance has dropped from pre-pandemic levels of about 50 attendees to usually 35 or fewer. And we now have less live music in our services. Our Parish meetings have drawn more attendees by being virtual.
- Shifted Board and most committee meetings to Zoom. Building, Interior Decoration, and Grounds Committees still meet in person to do their work, masked and distanced.
- Developed virtual activities for Prairie kids: Dungeons and Dragons (one night a week for younger kids, another for more experienced players), Weekly Fun night for young children, and HAWKS sex education program that runs for 13 weeks (90 minutes each Sunday, ending March 28, with 9 young people attending)
- Shifted WOW – the Women's Group – to Zoom. This has allowed women from Illinois, New Mexico, Colorado, and Alaska to participate. Last meeting drew 18 women!
- Adapted some Service Auction items to make them safe (either virtual or masked & socially spaced). Buyers were offered the choice of returning money paid for those activities that couldn't be held or donating the payment to Prairie (Many donated their payments.) Please send pictures if you have any.
- Turned Circle Dinners into interest groups: in-person hiking groups, and virtual groups: dinner group, a movie discussion group, a crafting group, a poetry group, a games and cards group, and a trivia group. These groups seem to be quite successful.
- Suggested car parades (One was held for the Frantz's birthdays, another for Metje Butler)
- Recommended driveway/yard visits. Please send pictures if you have any.
- Started weekly Singalongs in August, now held twice a month
- Initiated "Flamingo Visits" where members passed around a Prairie sign and a flock of flamingos with the one of the seven principles named on each flamingo. This was a project of the RE Committee.
- Conducted a hybrid virtual/in-person Prairie retreat over a 10-day period. A highlight was the key-log ceremony held around a fire ring and surrounded by waving big bluestem grass high on a hill at Holy Wisdom Monastery.

(pics on next page)



Service Auction mosaic project was adapted to the pandemic by offering it in two sessions outdoors with participants distanced and masked.



Kathy Gann heads for a key-log to put on the fire. Other attendees sit with people of their own household but distanced from others.



Zoom church on 6/14/2020. Some people choose to remain unseen, or perhaps they were just tuning into the service. All of our services are virtual.

News from MOSES

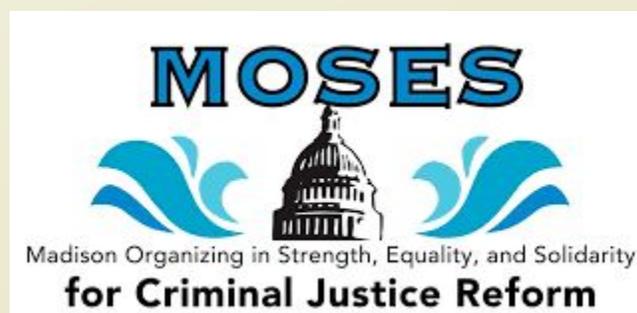
Molly Plunkett, Social Action Committee Co-Chair

WISDOM and MOSES continue to advocate for prison personnel and prisoners who are or can potentially be infected with COVID in the crowded conditions of the prisons. To draw attention to this concern, two former prisoners ran from Milwaukee to Madison during the coldest week of the year, completing their run with a Facebook Live “press conference” on Feb. 12. What impressive commitment!

WISDOM and MOSES have recently been pushing for Governor’s Budget items that can potentially reduce our prison population, such as strong funding of Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD), which is mostly directed at substance abuse. We are seeking inclusion of Mental Health Courts in this funding, to divert people with mental health issues from inappropriately ending up in prison.

MOSES is participating in The Big Share, sponsored by Community Shares of Wisconsin, on March 2. Two donors, Lynn McDonald and Dick Goldberg, will match donations up to \$1,000. Make your donation today and help keep criminal justice reform happening in Wisconsin! See MOSES’s page on The Big Share website.

To receive information directly from MOSES, email organizer Mark Rice at ricemark@gmail.com and ask to be put on the email list. MOSES has a lot going on and lots to take advantage of, and I don’t forward everything I should. For example, I just sent an email to Kelda Roys and Shelia Stubbs, asking them to advocate with Joint Finance for inclusion of Mental Health Courts in the TAD funding. With WISDOM’s help, it was easy!



Member Spotlight:

Chris Porter



What current Prairie positions (i.e. committees) do you hold/past positions?

I'm currently the finance committee chairperson and a member of the social action committee. Previously, I was vice president.

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

After a few years in Michigan, I grew up in Appleton, WI. I lived in Green Bay most of my adult life. I moved to Madison in 2012 to take a new job with the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. I worked for WI DOR for 32 years. I retired in 2019 but I am back there working temporary part time.

What brought you to Prairie?

I wasn't a UU member prior to moving to Madison but shortly after moving here I searched the internet for UU churches. Prairie seemed odd. No minister? I went to First Unitarian a couple times but just didn't click. In 2015 I attended Prairie for the first time. The service was about a survey by religious education students of member's religious beliefs. It was a perfect introduction to Prairie. The second service I attended was the summer read service. Wow, very open beliefs and people who love reading. These are my people! I think I signed the member book the third time I attended.

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

I work part time, which I really enjoy. I've been a little isolated during the Covid pandemic so I am super happy to have engaging work with occasional contact with real, live people. My main hobby is making cards. I read a lot and love to do all kinds of puzzles.

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

I like all kinds of puzzles – jigsaw, logic, cryptogram, sudoku, crossword... I could switch to getting the newspaper online but I really like doing the newspaper puzzles on paper every day

