

June
2021

Prairie Fire

The new prairie
grass window
film on the 2
windows by
the main
entrance from
5/11/21



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

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June Calendar

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

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Tuesday 1

- 7p Trivia (1st & 3rd Tuesday)

Thursday 3 (every Thursday)

- 6:30p Thursday Fun Night

Friday 4 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Advanced D&D

Saturday 5

- 10a Prairie WOW
- 12pm Beginner D&D (every Saturday)

Sunday 6

- 10a Service: "Bridging Ceremony" by Prairie
- 11a Virtual Coffee Hour

Tuesday 8

- 6p Board Meeting

Sunday 13

- 10a Service: "Prairie Poetry" by Prairie

Sunday 20

- 10a Service: "Music Sunday" by Prairie

Saturday 26

- 10a Creativity & Connection

Sunday 27

- 10a Service: "Welcoming the Summer Solstice - A Litha Celebration"



Dan Proud, Mary Mullen, Patty Stockdale, Deesa Pence & Norma Miller at Prairie Sing Along. Photo taken by Patty Stockdale.

Parish Meeting Recap

Rachel Long, President

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We had our Annual Parish Meeting on 5/23/21, and I was again impressed with the creativity, commitment and resilience of our community. Giant THANK YOUs to all those who have served us this year, including Board Members, Nominating Committee members, Chairs and members of all our committees, organizers, presenters, technical assistants and readers for our Sunday services, and leaders of small groups. Special thanks to our outgoing Treasurer Evan Creed, At Large Board Member Marty Drapkin, and Nominating Committee member Ron Frye.

Our Board for the next year will include:

Rachel Long, President (2nd year of 2nd term)

Vice President Lynn Currie (2nd year of 1st term)

Secretary Dan Proud (1st year of 2nd term)

Treasurer Suzanne Gernandt (1st year of 1st term)

At Large Member John Wunderlin (2nd year of 2nd term)

At Large Member Aidan Small (2nd year of 1st term)

At Large Member Penny Eiler (1st year of 1st term)

Nominating Committee members will be:

Rebecca Strome (2nd year of 2nd term)

Kent Wenger (1st year of 2nd term)

Paula Pachciarz (2nd year of 1st term)

Heidi Hughes (1st year of 1st term)

The next year will bring us so many positive changes. With vaccinations for Covid accelerating, in June we will start gathering in person again. Soon we will be using our beautiful new space, with our new minister Reverend Matt Aspin, and a new Director of Religious Exploration Alice Mandt. I look forward to a wonderful and exciting year!

Study Group

Rachel Long, President

Our group will be taking a break for the summer, after a year concentrating mainly on racism, but also discussing class and trans issues. If you didn't join our discussions, you might still consider tackling some of our reading list this summer.

Here were the books we read:

White Trash by Nancy Isenberg

Caste: the Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds

White Fragility- Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin Diangelo

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Breathe - A Letter to My Sons by Imani Perry

How to Be an Anti-Racist by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi.

We read these articles:

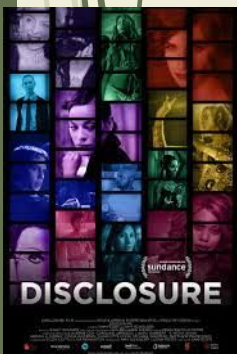
"What Is Owed" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

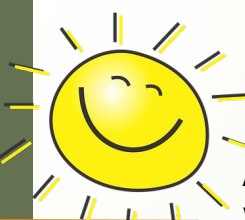
"The Case for Reparations" by Ta-Nehisi Coates

We saw this film:

"Disclosure" produced by Laverne Cox

WOW! The information and discussion were incredible. In the fall, we will be branching out to look at migrant and indigenous peoples issues. We look forward to seeing you in September!





Gathering in Person 6/13 Behind the Annex

Rachel Long, President

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After months of trying to accommodate ever-changing information about Covid, we got the word from the CDC in mid-May that the vaccinated among us could gather safely with only minimal precautions, especially outdoors. But wait – what about those who CAN'T get vaccinated? In particular, how do we include our youngest Prairie folks, who won't get access to a vaccine until at least September?

Your Board and Religious Exploration Committee have been struggling with this question, trying to balance issues of safety, inclusion and equity, while wanting to meet our members' need to gather together. At the Annual Parish Meeting, we brought the question to the community, and discussed how we should proceed. We will be using what we heard as we formulate our approach with our youth, and will let you know our plans in the next 2 weeks.

Watch for information on PrairieNews in advance of our first outdoor service, June 13, 2021. No matter what we decide, we know there will be no perfect solution, and some will be left out. We will be trying to stream services on zoom for those unable to be at our services this summer, but it's not the same. Please reach out to your Board and Committee Chairs, and let us know what is working and what isn't as we continue to try to adapt to the strange world we find ourselves in right now. Let's keep our focus on our goal of creating the Beloved Community.

Housing & Property Report



Members: Jim Lyne and Randy Converse (co-chairs), Al Nettleton, Morris Sadicario, Heidi Hughes, John Gernandt, John Wunderlin, Barb Chatterton ("aesthetic" consultant), Karen Deaton (chair of H and P Landscaping Subcommittee)

Tasks completed and begun:

1. Venting of kitchen: John Wunderlin has arranged for special venting of upstairs meeting house kitchen, completion of which should be last hurdle in our quest to get a full occupancy permit from the city to fully use the meeting house.
2. Raccoon removal and remediation: raccoons have been removed from meeting house attic, remediation to be completed by end of this month.
3. Enclosure for new HVAC equipment in meetinghouse back yard: John Gernandt and John Wunderlin are drafting blueprints for this and will be supervising construction once city grants us a full occupancy permit for meetinghouse.
4. clean up tasks outdoors completed: John Wunderlin
5. clean up tasks in meeting house to prepare for return to full use of meeting house completed: Raju
6. several rehab tasks in meeting house completed: John Wunderlin
7. new window treatments in main room of meeting house installed : Barb Chatterton and Heidi Hughes in collaboration with other members of Interior Subcommittee of Remodeling Committee
8. privacy window film on front windows of meeting house installed : Barb and Heidi with help from Interior Subcommittee of Remodeling Committee
9. new system for hanging artwork: John Gernandt and Kathy Converse collaborated to purchase the system. Will be installed in near future.
10. "prairie grass" wall art: constructed and installed by John Gernandt, John Wunderlin and members of Interior Subcommittee of Remodeling Committee

Alice Mandt - New DRE!

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration



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Dear Prairie UU Community,

It is a pleasure to be introducing myself as the new Director of Religious Exploration at Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. Having served as Director of Religious Education at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation for two years, I have come to know Holly Tellander, your previous DRE, and it is truly an honor to step into this role, following such a bright person who has led with integrity, creativity and dedication. I look forward to learning more fully about the work you have all been doing together!



I'm a life-long Unitarian Universalist, and I grew up in Madison, attending, at different times, all three Madison congregations. I have warm memories from my time in the Prairie RE program in particular. Having attended religious education programs at UU churches throughout my life, I have a strong grasp of the importance of faith development throughout the stages of early life and personally have been very much shaped by those experiences. I have also had a lot of training on the national level through the UUA, particularly involvement with anti-oppression work, youth empowerment, and leadership development. I'm excited to bring these skills to the position of DRE at Prairie.

I have been very involved in youth work within the denomination for over 10 years. Besides my involvement in religious education programs and youth groups as a young UU in Madison I have also had the privilege of working with the UUA as a youth and young adult leader.

- My first experience on the national level was when I attended a DRUUMM (Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) youth of color leadership training in 2005 when I was 16.
- From 2005-2007 I was on the YRUU youth council and YRUU steering committee, and attended many meetings throughout the country as the denomination was trying to revitalize its youth ministries.
- From 2007-2009 I was involved in the process of revisioning youth ministry and was part of the group of youth leaders who called the UUA to show more support for youth at a congregational level. Because of this experience I feel that I have unique insights into the needs of youth and congregations.

I hope to bring my expertise in issues of social justice to the youth at Prairie UU. While continuing to foster your community's already deep investment in your children, I hope to bring my own gifts that will hopefully further encourage exchanges of learning within the entire community.

My approach to religious education emphasizes the cultivation of a strong sense of self, a safe space for asking questions and challenging oneself and others, a celebration and commitment to diversity, and a guided and responsive environment in which children are encouraged to pursue their own searches for truth and meaning.

The 19th Century Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing said it best:
 “The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own;
 Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;
 Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;
 Not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs;
 Not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect of peculiar notions,
 But to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;
 Not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;
 Not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment;
 In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life.”

To this end, I cannot wait to offer many opportunities for our children to learn and grow in cooperation with parents/caregivers and the larger Prairie UU community.

Prairie RE: June Edition

Karen Deaton, Religious Exploration (RE) Committee Chair

Welcome Alice!

I am very pleased that you will find our new Director of Religious Exploration (DRE) Alice Mandt’s first Prairie Fire column in this issue. Though at this point we’re continuing with our pandemic-era online RE programming, there is a lot going on behind the scenes for the RE committee. We’re introducing Alice to the people who make things happen at Prairie - she attended a Board meeting on her first day of employment and will be introduced to Prairie’s committees in the weeks to come. We’re finding ways to introduce Prairie’s families to Alice - she came to her first Fun Night on Zoom on May 13 and got into the zany swing of things. Alice will guide us in planning our programming for the 2021-22 RE year and designing our space as we move back into the Meeting House.

Resuming in-person activities at Prairie

Thank you to all who participated in the parish meeting discussion about unvaccinated children at Prairie. There are different ways to prioritize conflicting concerns: minimizing the possibility of spreading covid at Prairie; and bringing children together at Prairie to maximize their participation in a supportive community. I love the way this congregation can respectfully listen to differing points of view and patiently work toward a decision. Hearing your perspectives helps our congregational leadership decide how to balance the risk of covid transmission among children, the risk to vulnerable adults, and the benefits of being together in person.

To help prepare a plan for RE activities, we have some follow up questions. If you have children in RE, [please click here to complete a short survey](#) about the activities your family might participate in this summer at Prairie.



Search Committee Report

Renee Deschard, Search Committee Chair



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On 12/8/19 & 1/26/20, the Congregation voted for the Search Committee to search for, vet and bring to the Board/Congregation a full time 1 year contract Minister. Search began meeting in January of 2020 (sometimes weekly). We sent out and analyzed the responses to a Congregational Survey. We used these responses to complete our Congregational Record (aka job posting) and this was posted in March 2020. Then covid19 happened and Search recommended pausing the Search process.

We reconvened in the summer of 2020. In September, we brought the UUA's Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop & service to Prairie. We then re-posted our Congregational Record in December and began receiving applications in January. The spring moved quickly with conducting virtual interviews (questions based on responses from the Congregational Survey), watching recorded services, completing reference checks with multiple references, reading through their websites and extensive application packets.

We voted to recommend a candidate, Matt Aspin, which the Board approved on Saturday April 17th 2021. The Congregation voted on May 9th 2021 via Zoom. 65 members were counted as present. 2 voted no, 3 abstained and the rest were counted as yes votes.

The Board approved the final ministerial contract (based on the UUA's template with modifications made by our Negotiating Team) on May 11th. The contract has been signed and Matt Aspin will start at Prairie on August 1st 2021.

A huge thank you to the current & past Search Committee members who devoted countless hours to the Search process over the last 17 months: Barb Park, Gary Gates, Jane Richards, Katrina Thompson, Peggy Small, Jennifer Johncox, Steve Hingle And also a huge thank you to our Prairie Negotiating Team who spent a ton of time modifying the UUA's Ministerial Contract to best fit the needs of Prairie UU Society. Team members: Evan Creed, Peggy Small & Rebecca Strome.

Caring Committee Report

Barbara Frye, Caring Committee Chair



We have kept a lower profile during the pandemic but are still checking up on people and assisting in the ways in which we can. One member will be having surgery soon and we are assisting them in numbers of ways in that process. Someone in our group had food delivered to them due to a minor surgery and we chat with people who do not have computers or who don't see the group emails. We leave food on their porches with their knowledge. We have counseled people and given them resources from very competent folks in our membership. Soon we will be able to do more and expand our connections as we have in the past, as things become safer.

Program Report

Renee Deschard, Program Committee Chair



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Spring/summer brings increased covid19 vaccination and nice weather. The Program Committee is working with the Board to plan out our services with the idea of transitioning to in person outdoor services. We all want to see people in person, but will need to remain flexible with our ever changing new normal.

Sunday Service info is sent weekly on the Prairie News listserv, on the homepage of our website, on Facebook and in online orders of service. Please contact Dan at admin@uuprairie.org to be added to the Prairie News listserv.

Prairie completed the Five Practices of Welcome Renewal for 2020! The Program Committee has been working on this over the past year along with consulting our Interweave group (for Prairie members and friends who are LGBTQ+ or allies). You can read more about the process here:

<https://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/program/five-practices-welcome-renewal>

We thank all of our Prairie presiders, presenters, coordinators, readers, musicians & Zoom helpers who make our services so wonderful! Program Committee Members: Penny Eiler, Ron Frye, Suzanne Gernandt, Barb Park, Robin Proud, Rick Ruecking, Nancy Wunderlin, (Dan Klock ex officio)

Finance Report

Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair



Last fall we set a budget of \$161,261. The three main sources of meeting the budget are using \$30,330 of the minister compensation reserve, raising \$5000 from the annual auction and raising \$115,231 in pledges. We surpassed our pledge goal. Total pledges are \$123,811. In addition to our pledge drive, the interiors committee sought to raise \$5569 for décor items that were not part of the remodel budget. They raised \$5750.

Our pandemic PPP loan was forgiven, resulting in an additional \$12,000 of income. Combined with the pledges, we have approximately \$20,000 in expected additional income.

At this time auction plans are not set. We are hoping a live auction may be possible in the summer. At this time, it is difficult to consider offering events to bid on at the auction. Perhaps by mid-summer, Covid restrictions will be less necessary and people will be more comfortable meeting in person. Last year we raised \$15,000 through our auction. The majority of events had to be cancelled but many people generously donated what they had paid for events. We really want to avoid being in the position of events being cancelled again. If you haven't yet provided items or events that were purchased, please contact your buyers to make arrangements. As an alternative to the auction, or maybe in addition, we are considering having an online fund-raising sale.

We had budgeted \$7500 for the contingency fund. We have spent \$5400 on raccoon removal and mitigation. In addition, we may have additional expenses in kitchen venting that were not part of the remodel budget. That cost is not clear at this time, but may be about \$5000. Other than these two items, expenses are tracking as expected.

Humanist Union Food Drive

Bob Park

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Citing the belief that action speaks louder than words of prayer, the Humanist Union used the National Day of Prayer on May 6th as its kick-off day for a 4 day food drive for the Allied Food Pantry in the Boys and Girls on Jenewein Road. Non-perishable food and personal items were collected in bins set out in the Annex driveway and the driveways of the homes of Barb and Bob Park and Nick Schweitzer. The generosity of contributors can be seen in the photos.



Bob and Barb Park with the items being delivered - photo taken by Carol Rushmore of the food pantry

MOSES Update

Pam Gates, Social Action Committee Co-Chair

MOSES is beginning to address some of the root causes and traumas that afflict, in particular, people of color, especially those who are also poor, and that are likely to contribute to the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Task forces on homelessness, education, and public safety, the first two under the umbrella committee Racial Justice for All Children, have been established and are working hard, along with all the other committees and task forces of WISDOM (statewide) and MOSES.

The UU Association is getting more involved as well. The spring issue of its magazine, “UU World,” was devoted entirely to UUs addressing issues of race, justice, and equity. I recommend it.

Speaking of enlightening reading, I just finished “Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” by Nicole Fleetwood, a professor of American Studies and Art History at Rutgers. I highly recommend it, as I do all the books I’ve reviewed for MOSES newsletters. You can find my reviews at MOSESmadison.org, along with lots of other information about MOSES and its work to level the playing field in our city and county.