7/18/2021 was our first service back in the Meeting House since May 2019. Photo taken by Deesa Pence.

Prairie Contacts
Rachel Long, President—president@uuprairie.org
Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration—dre@uuprairie.org
Dan Klock, Administrator—admin@uuprairie.org
Renee Deschard, Prairie Fire Editor—prairiefire@uuprairie.org

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

Table of Contents
Calendar 2
Greeting Prairie Community 3
Zoom Services Are Coming to an End 4
Program Plans 4
October Building Dedication 5
Religious Exploration (RE) 6
Membership Committee Report 7&8
Age-Friendly Network - Madison 8
Allied Partners/Allied Wellness Center Update 9
Return of the Prairie Choir! 10
August Calendar

Please see [www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org) for detailed descriptions & public event links (where applicable)

**Sunday 1**
- 10a: Meet ‘N Greet with Rev. Matt Aspin at Mendota Park

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

**Friday 6 (every Friday)**
- 4:30p Advanced D&D

**Saturday 7**
- 10a Prairie WOW

**Sunday 8**
- 10a Service: “Flower Ceremony” by Prairie

**Sunday 15**
- 10a Service: LGBTQIA+ Panel

**Sunday 22**
- 9a Choir Rehearsal
- 10a Service by Rev. Matt Aspin

**Saturday 28**
- 10a Creativity & Connection

**Sunday 29**
- 10a Service: “Unitarian, Suffragist, and Black - Frances E. W. Harper” by Robin Proud
- 11:30 Board Meeting

Morris Sadicario (left) & Bob Park (right), along with several others, helped clear a tree from the Meeting House backyard on July 5th 2021. Pictures taken by Deesa Pence.
It is hard for me to believe that I will begin serving as your Minister in less than a week. My journey to this moment began 5 years ago, when after a successful career in non-profit human resources leadership I heeded an internal call to redirect my efforts towards the service of something larger than myself. I found Unitarian Universalism later in life, soon after my 12-year-old daughter Cece had a significant health scare at age 2 and I suddenly realized that maybe I wasn’t quite fully equipped to face all that this life can hand us on my own. (Don’t worry…she came through that and is a happy, healthy tween at this point).

As many that find this faith tradition later in life express, I was thrilled to have finally “found my people.” I couldn’t believe there were communities of folks that held values similar to my own coming together intentionally to offer mutual support, seeking to strengthen each other and expand the causes of justice in the wider world. After throwing myself headfirst into lay leadership (you know-Board Leader, Membership Chair, Auction Lead, RE Teacher- all the things) I finally realized that this was where I wanted to fully dedicate the efforts of my life.

From what I have learned so far (from all the folks I met during the interview process and from reading your 966-page history from cover to cover), Prairie UU Society seems to embody the best of all that drew me down this path in the first place. I love the fierce independence and sense of self-direction this lay-led community appears to embody. My favorite definition of a leader is simply, “Someone that people choose to follow.” Given this, I am eager to join this community and to follow your leadership as we prepare to face the uncertain future together.

If you’re the leader, what does that leave the Minister to do? Well, to minister! My preferred definition of the word minister comes from its verb form, “to attend to the needs of.” I see so many good things already in place here, AND…within any human system there are typically more needs (both expressed and as yet unidentified) calling out for attention than resources available. You have made the decision to call a minister for this next year, and I suspect over the next 12 months we will discover together what those needs are and how I might best be able to support them.

I couldn’t be more excited to begin my ministerial career with you. They say that a Minister’s first 3 years of ministry is when their formation really takes place. One of your roles as the leader in our relationship will be to help me develop into the best minister I can be. Given all of this, my hopes for our time together are best summed up in the lyrics to one of our beloved UU songs:

“From you I receive. To you, I give. Together we share. And from this, we live.”

May it be so.
Rev. Matt
Zoom Services Are Coming to an End

Rachel Long, President

When Covid 19 shut down our in-person services, our wonderful Program Committee got creative and rapidly adapted. In March of 2020, we had our first virtual service on Zoom. We started meeting outside in person on 6/13/21, and since 7/18/21 we are finally back in our main meeting house for Sunday services. We have continued to offer Zoom as an alternative to meeting in person, but it is extremely challenging to manage the technology for both an in person service and a live virtual one on Zoom - we just don’t have the personnel or volunteers. The Program Committee has decided to discontinue Zoom moving forward.

Bob Park of the Archives Committee regularly posts partial or entire services on the Member Page of our website. You can email admin@uuprairie.org or archives@uuprairie.org for the password. Depending on permissions, some presentations are publicly available here: https://uuprairie.org/sundays/recent-services/

Thank you very much to Renee Deschard & John Wunderlin and all the others who helped to run the Zoom services and keep us all connected during this challenging time.

Program Plans

Renee Deschard, Program Committee Chair

It’s been over 2 years since we’ve had services in our Meeting House at 2010 Whenona Drive. On 7/18 we were able to move back in and enjoy the beautifully renovated space. We’ll have a Building Dedication service on 10/3 and an open house on 10/9. 7/25 & 8/1 services will not be at 2010 Whenona as we have special events happening (please read below; see the Prairie website for descriptions).

7/25 Joint Service with Free Congregation of Sauk County:
Gratitude 10:10am.
Indoor service: 307 Polk St, Sauk City. It is a pleasant drive of about 30 minutes from the west side of Madison. Feel free to carpool.
Childcare: Childcare will be provided outside if the weather is nice. Otherwise it will be indoors.
Virtual option to listen: The link will be posted on the morning of the service on the FCSC website at 10am https://www.freecongregation.org/home.aspx

8/1 Meet 'N Greet with Rev. Matt Aspin @ Mendota Park
10am
Mendota Park: 5133 Co Hwy M, Middleton, WI 53562 (Shelter #1)
Childcare: No childcare on this Sunday - kids/youth will stay with their families. We’ll have a bubble machine & chalk.
October Building Dedication
Mary Mullen

Yeah! And double Yeah! After 2 years and 2 months, we are finally meeting in our newly remodeled meeting house and planning for the dedication is underway! Dedication events are scheduled for Sunday, October 3rd, at 10 am, with an open house for the wider community set for the following Saturday, October 9, 3:00-6:00 pm.

It only took from mid-May 2019, until Sunday, July 18, 2021, to get all the work done, finally, finally receive the occupancy permit from the city, and then hold our first Sunday service in our beautiful enlarged space. About 35 people attended this first inside service. Children, who by definition can’t yet be vaccinated against COVID-19, were engaged in activities out-of-doors by Director of Religious Exploration (DRE) Alice Mandt, additional adult helpers, and parents. In-person outdoor services have been held in the Prairie Annex backyard since June 13.

As with many Prairie undertakings, it has taken a large percentage of the congregation to bring our remodeling project to fruition: funding, then endless meetings and decisions, finally the finished project. The committees and their members will be honored in a visual tribute at the dedication.

Building Dedication Planners
Aren’t we happy that we can finally start planning for the dedication of our lovely remodeled meeting house! Pictured at the Zoom meeting on 7/17/21 are Prairie President Rachel Long, Archives Chair Mary Mullen, Program Committee member Robin Proud, Nancy Wunderlin, involved in Hospitality & music, John Wunderlin from the Building Committee and our chief technology person, Program Chair Renee Deschard, Treasurer Suzanne Gernandt, Membership Co-Chair Patty Stockdale, and Al Nettleton from the Building Committee. Not waving because they got away a few seconds too early are Membership Co-Chair Deesa Pence and Building Committee Chair Tom Robinson. Picture taken by Mary Mullen.
We’re off to a great start with Religious Exploration this Summer! Some things to note for the upcoming month:

Though adults are again meeting indoors in our meeting house, our children under 12 can’t yet be vaccinated. RE programming will continue to take place outdoors until further notice. We will only cancel RE if thunderstorms are expected. Youth ages 11 and up will be off-site in August (see below). At this point, we will continue to take children ages 10 and under to Marlborough Park for RE. Check them in at 9:50 in front of the meeting house (the Crawford Street entrance). Please continue to have your child equipped with a mask and water bottle and apply any sunscreen or bug spray that you find necessary. Meet your children in the backyard of the meeting house after the service, or walk toward the park if we have not yet returned.

We are planning weekly fundraiser outings for our youth (ages 11+) in the month of August, alternating between kayaking and biking. As a group, youth will choose local organizations they’d like to support (we’ve preselected GSAFE as the organization for the first event). We will be asking you to pledge your support for each of these events. When you are deciding how much to pledge each week, please remember that we will be asking you for a pledge each week in August.

- On August 8th (rain date August 15), Prairie Youth (ages 11+) will have a Kayaking fundraiser on Lake Wingra to raise money for GSAFE, an organization that strives to “increase the capacity of LGBTQ+ students, educators and families to create schools in Wisconsin where all youth thrive.” Please click here to pledge your support to our youth and GSAFE!
- The fundraising outdoor fun will continue with August 15th (biking), August 22nd (kayaking), and August 29th (biking).

On August 29th RE will have a back-to-school blessing outdoors for the children as well as a backpack drive. Please consider purchasing a backpack to donate (children might like to donate a backpack that matches their own.) Please consider purchasing a backpack to donate (children might like to donate a backpack that matches their own.) Donations of school supplies are also welcome, especially pencils, washable markers, glue sticks, and kleenex. During RE that morning, the children will pack up the backpacks.

Parents, please watch for my weekly emails that will have more information about what activities we have planned for the upcoming Sunday.

We are always looking for volunteers for the Religious Exploration Program here at Prairie! If you are interested in:

- Helping out with the younger children at the park on Sunday mornings
- Accompanying the youth on a kayak or a bike
- Bringing snacks or delivering pizza for the youth events

Please contact me at dre@uuprairie.org
Now that the nearly 2.5 year remodeling project is signed off on and we can again use the main building for Sunday Services, Membership Committee is becoming re-energized and expects to become more active. Some of our plans follow.

**Consult with Rev Matt Aspin and UUA:** We plan to meet with Rev Aspin once he is onboard August 1 to discuss how to grow Prairie’s membership which has stayed at about 100 members for a number of years. In addition to discussions and planning with Rev Aspin, we plan to study the UUA website with its membership resources that include, Create a Clear Path to Membership ([https://www.uua.org/growth/membership](https://www.uua.org/growth/membership)) and Membership, Growth, and Outreach ([https://www.uua.org/growth](https://www.uua.org/growth)).

**Visitors:** Our recent inperson Sunday services have drawn a number of visitors, including families with children. We will reach out to them with calls and emails of welcome and to answer any of their questions and will coordinate with DRE Alice Mundt and RE Chair Karen Deaton to avoid overlap. We expect the UUA website can help us eventually to assess how welcoming we are and create Visitor Packets with newsletters, treats, Visitor Forms, UU info sheets or pamphlets. The UUA websites include [www.uua.org/leadership/library/secret-seeker](http://www.uua.org/leadership/library/secret-seeker) and [www.uua.org/leadership/library/assessing-hospitality](http://www.uua.org/leadership/library/assessing-hospitality).

**Orientation:** We plan to hold Member Orientations in the fall and the Spring, as needed. We will build on the Orientation format that Erin Bosch and Deesa Pence had in previous years and involve Rev Matt Aspin in the planning and gatherings.

**Member Recognition:** Traditionally, new member recognitions have been at the beginning of services and we can continue this format when new members join. We also discussed having a whole service about membership where we can recognize all our members, old and new, and to celebrate being together. A second idea is having a Sunday Service called Friendship Sunday to invite and enable friends, neighbors and loved ones of members to experience Prairie, the place that brings us joy and meaning. See [www.uua.org/leadership/library/asking-friends-worship-oh-my](http://www.uua.org/leadership/library/asking-friends-worship-oh-my).

**Circle Dinners:** We plan to resume in-person Circle Dinners in the fall. Circle dinners include 4 to 6 families that may meet monthly to share meals in each family’s home. If families prefer they can gather at one of the Prairie’s buildings, in a restaurant, or at a park. There will be signup sheets in the foyer in September to gather names of those interested.

Last year during the pandemic, Membership Committee organized 10 or so small groups of members and friends who shared interest areas, including crafts, games, poetry, movie discussion, singing, virtual dinner, and outdoor walking. The interest groups met by Zoom while walking groups provided participants with the opportunities to socialize safely and enjoy the outdoors. If interested, these groups can continue to meet, but they will not be organized by the Membership Committee.
Age-Friendly Network - Madison
Molly Plunkett, Social Action Committee Co-Chair

In late 2019, with City of Madison Mayor Rhodes-Conway’s endorsement, Madison became part of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. This was a great first step to making our city more livable by adapting, creating and putting in place policies, services, settings and structure within the eight domains of livability that support and enable Madison residents to thrive and age well.

On August 15, 2021, the City of Madison, along with AARP, will be launching a survey to gather information from people aged 45+ who live, work, or play here. Survey data will be used to create an action plan that will inform City leaders about how to make Madison age-friendly. See this link for more information about Age Friendly Communities: https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/

If you are interested in joining a steering committee of community groups, local stakeholders, and residents invested in making Madison a great place to live for all ages please email John Weichelt at: jweichelt@cityofmadison.com
Allied Partners

Prairie has been a member for many years of Allied Partners which is a collection of churches that support the ALLIed neighborhood. Allied Partners makes significant donations to the local Joining Forces for Families Office (Dane County Human Services) to fund eviction and utility cutoff prevention. Several families are helped every month. Every academic semester Allied Partners also sponsors 1-2 $500 scholarships for residents of the area who are pursuing any kind of post high school education. Member churches also contribute bus and gas passes to the Allied Wellness Center, one of the local nonprofit organizations. They also fund and staff monthly community meals hosted by the Allied Dunn’s Marsh Neighborhood Association. A Special Projects fund of Allied Partners is regularly apped by neighborhood groups for their events: like a bouncy house, dunk tank or most recently a DJ for the Brotherhood group’s annual basketball tournament. Bob Park has maintained the website for Allied Partners for many years. Thank you Bob.

Allied Wellness Center (AWC)

Prairie has for several years supported the AWC by sharing our offertory collection for a 3 month period. The Allied Wellness Center is holistic health and neighborhood outreach organization staffed by one paid half time Community Health Liaison. Over the years the AWC sponsored many programs tailored to chronic health needs of the area diabetes care, diet and exercise for high blood pressure sufferers, support groups for drug users, lunches for kids during summer breaks, and on an irregular basis had services of volunteer nurses for consultation. There is a core of residents who have functioned as “Welcomers” to the neighborhood originally for new neighbors but later for outreach with information about services and programs at AWC. AWC provides bus passes and gas cards to people in need of help with transportation, copays for prescriptions, cash assistance and household and personal care products. More recently AWC has sponsored training of 8 residents as Community Health Workers, an emerging area of paraprofessional work bridging health care providers with residents of underserved areas. Remote training was provided by Milwaukee Area Health Education Center and AWC funded quality tablets with reliable wifi connections, paid stipends for training hours, prep and meeting times and outreach work in community. Community Health Workers have assisted with vaccination clinics in the neighborhood and are also very active in food distribution in Allied which has only one small grocery. Molly P is on the board and has helped obtain several grants for AWC over the years.

If you have any time on Friday mornings, the Allied Wellness Center really needs help delivering 2nd Harvest food boxes to families in the neighborhood. They are currently delivering more than 100 boxes with fresh food to families every week. Contact Molly P. if you can help on any basis.

Allied Partners/
Allied Wellness Center Update
Molly Plunkett, Social Action Committee Co-Chair
Return of the Prairie Choir!

Barb Park, Choir Director

Have you missed singing during our long absence from the meeting house? Here is your chance. We are welcoming back old and new singers to the choir. Here are the details:

Rehearsal schedule:
August 22
September 5
September 12
October 3

All rehearsals will be held in the main building and start at 9:00 am sharp so we can clear the decks for the program participants to set up. We will sing both the prelude and offertory for the dedication of the building on October 3rd. We will plan on continuing to sing about once per month and coordinate with our new minister Matt. Amber will be accompanying the choir temporarily.

If you are returning to the choir, welcome back. If you are new, either to Prairie or to the choir, we will be delighted to have you join us. Since we will all be starting from square one this is a great time to join!