

Prairie Fire

September
2021



Rachel Long (left) presided and Rev. Matt Aspin (center right) spoke at the service on 8/22/21. Photo taken by Renee Deschard

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.

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September Calendar

Please see www.uuprairie.org for detailed descriptions & public event links (where applicable)

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Friday 3 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Advanced D&D

Saturday 4

- 10a Prairie WOW
- 4:30p Beginner D&D (every Saturday)

Sunday 5

- 10a Service: "Labor in the Pulpits / On the Bimah / In the Minbar" by Rebecca Meier-Rao

Tuesday 7

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

Sunday 12

- 10a Service: Ingathering by Prairie
- 12p New Member Orientation

Monday 13

- 7p Study Group "Braiding Sweetgrass"

Sunday 15

- 10a Service: LGBTQIA+ Panel

Sunday 19

- 10a Service by Rev. Matt Aspin

Saturday 25

- 10a Creativity & Connection

Sunday 26

- 10a Service: "Unitarian, Suffragist, and Black - Frances E. W. Harper" by Robin Proud



Deesa & Richard hosted the Circle Games group in person (which is now back to virtual) where Nancy Wunderlin won the game of Exploding Kittens. Photo taken by Marie Andrae.

Minister's Musings

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister

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My first communication to you comes with a mix of both joy and heaviness. The joy comes from all the connections I've made during my first 3 weeks as your Minister. This community is a gift which just keeps on giving, each time I meet and get to know the next person that calls Prairie their home. And the next person, and the next...



The heaviness comes from knowing that Covid-19 continues to block us from being able to fully enjoy all of the gifts of relationship that this community makes available to brighten our journeys.

To live life fully is to be willing to risk opening ourselves as completely as we are able to ALL that life has to offer-both the good and the bad. Expanding our capacity for joy, then, takes a significant amount of trust. I can see from the relationships that already exist here that many of you have developed that depth of trust with each other over a lifetime-through celebrations and losses, through achievements and heartbreaks. It was the evidence of your ability to come together in joy AND withstand hard times that initially drew me (and will continue to draw others) towards your community, and it will be the glue that holds us all together through this latest challenge. And the next challenge, and the next...

Our relationships define us. They have value because of the commitments we make with each other. And they are one of the few sources of strength powerful enough to sustain us through the most trying of times.

There is more joy to come. There always is. That joy will be magnified by the commitments we make to remain connected to one another along the way-not in spite of the challenges we face together, but because of them.

I am beyond grateful you have invited me to join you on this journey, and I know there are so many others out there looking for the same. And whether you found this community 40 years or 40 minutes ago, I look forward to joining you as we each continue to expand our capacities for living fully.

Together...



Meeting Indoors At Prairie UU Society

Rachel Long, President

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Per the Public Health Department of Madison & Dane County, effective August 19, 2021, face coverings are required among people ages two and older when in any enclosed space open to the public where other people, except for members of the person's own household or living unit, are present.

https://publichealthmdc.com/documents/2021-08-17_Order_17.pdf

The Board is making the following requests:

- ALL who enter our buildings (ages 2 & up) wear masks covering both mouth and nose for the entire time they are indoors
- Separate households maintain 6-foot distance from one another when inside.
- Do not eat food indoors, because that would require people to remove masks.
- Do not congregate anywhere except in the meeting room, where the ventilation is far superior to the rest of our buildings.
- For drinking beverages, briefly pull down masks to take a sip.
- Meet only in the meeting hall, and remain masked.
- Wind or brass musicians and vocalists are encouraged to pre-record their performances for Sunday services.

We believe that, with these limitations, vaccinated individuals can continue to meet safely indoors without putting our members and our communities at undue risk. Unvaccinated individuals remain at much higher risk of catching Covid and of developing severe disease when gathering indoors, even when masked and social distancing. We will continue to have our Religious Exploration students gathering outside only until our children can be vaccinated.

Seeking Artwork

Barbara Chatterton Frye, Housing & Property Committee

We will be having a single piece of rotating art in this space. This one is an original from Suzanne Gernandt. Next up will be a watercolor from Mary Somers. Please let Barbara Chatterton Frye know if you have a piece you wish to share.

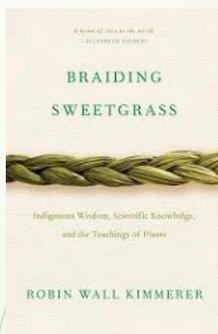


Announcing Fall Study Group Line Up!

Rachel Long, President

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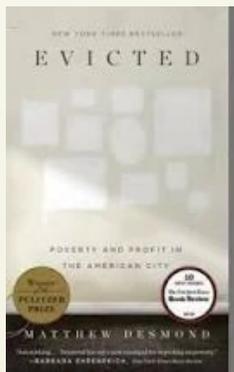
Here are the selections we will be studying each month this fall. If one of the selections takes only 1 session to discuss, we will discuss a film on the second Monday of that month. We will take the second Monday of December off.



SEPTEMBER - *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and*

the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer, led by Heidi Hughes

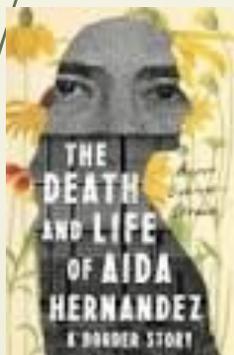
“Robin Wall Kimmerer has written an extraordinary book, showing how the factual, objective approach of science can be enriched by the ancient knowledge of the indigenous people. It is the way she captures beauty that I love the most—the images of giant cedars and wild strawberries, a forest in the rain and a meadow of fragrant sweetgrass will stay with you long after you read the last page.”—Jane Goodall. This novel won many awards.



OCTOBER - To Be Determined

NOVEMBER - *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond, led by Suzanne Gernandt

“This book gave me a better sense of what it is like to be very poor in this country than anything else I have read. . . . It is beautifully written, thought-provoking, and unforgettable.”—Bill Gates. Won the Pulitzer prize along with many other awards. The author went to UW Madison and the families he discusses are in Milwaukee.



DECEMBER - *The Death and Life of Aida Hernandez-A Border Story* by Aaron Bobrow-Strain, led by Deesa Pence

“Bobrow-Strain writes like a journalist and sociologist, with clear information on history and policy, along with plenty of narrative tension. Hernandez is not a perfect immigrant (she has a criminal record), but she’s a real one, and her story provides insight into how the larger immigration machine actually works.” —Adriana E. Ramirez, Los Angeles Times

Study Group Calendar - Time: 7-8:30 pm

September 13 & 27 - Braiding Sweetgrass

October 11 & 25 - TBD

November 8 & 22 - Evicted

December 13 - Aida Hernandez

Please join us!

Rachel Long, President
Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society

Religious Exploration (RE)

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

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We've had a great Summer in Prairie Religious Exploration so far! As you may know the younger children (10 and under) have been venturing to Marlborough Park every Sunday to play and participate in fun activities. Last week we made ice cream in a bag! It has been great to see the children enjoying the playground, basketball, and chalk drawing with each other as well!

The youth (11+) have been spending their Sundays away from Prairie. On August 8th the youth all met at Lake Wingra to participate in a Kayak-a-thon in which they raised money for G-SAFE, an organization that supports LGBTQ+ middle and high school students in Wisconsin. Through generous donations from the congregation the four youth who participated in the Kayak-a-thon were able to raise over \$800 for G-SAFE!

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 this fall will continue to take place outdoors until further notice. We will only cancel RE if thunderstorms are expected. Children ages 10 and under will be having RE in Prairie's backyard which will be equipped with screen tents for mosquito and rain protection. Please continue to have your child equipped with a mask and water bottle and apply any sunscreen or bug spray that you find necessary.
- This fall children will be in age groupings: Littles (ages 6 and under), Bigs (7+) and Youth (11+). However there can be flexibility depending on individual preferences and needs.
- The Littles will be engaging in art and story projects loosely based on the Chalice Children curriculum provided by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Here is a brief description from the UUA website. "In a group setting, with loving adult guides, young children can engage in spiritual seeking, develop their openness to sharing, and experience the benefit of a supportive community." There is a general structure for each session which includes, free play, circle time, songs and games, and a closing. All of this aims to build community and lasting relationships among the children.
- The Bigs will be doing games and sports with a focus on cooperative play, inclusion and empathy. Each Sunday we plan to learn and play a different game or sport. We will try to find teachable moments that connect the sports and games being played to the Big's own spiritual development.
- For the Youth, since they have been vaccinated and can safely meet indoors one of our first projects will be designing a quiet/meditation room in the RE space. Part of the youth curriculum will also include interacting with the book, [To This I Give My Heart: A Coming of Age Journal](#). We will also be focusing on building a covenant to guide how we engage with each other. Youth will be involved in decision making and the planning process for how they develop and deepen their Unitarian Universalist identities.
- If you have any questions about our plans, have any input to offer or especially if you'd like to be involved in any of these projects we welcome your participation.



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

Auction News!

Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair

We will have an auction Sunday November 7th at the Meeting House. Start thinking about the high quality items you would like to offer.

Please keep covid safety and uncertainty in mind for anything you offer. Perhaps instead of gathering a group for a shared meal you could offer to deliver a meal.

We expect to have the 2022 auction in March so, for this auction consider items that would be good for the winter months. More details will be shared soon.



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Membership Committee Is Active

Patty Stockdale, Membership Committee Co-Chair

Membership Committee is here to help grow Prairie UU Society's membership and make people feel welcomed with a smile and warm "hello" when they arrive to attend Sunday Services. Please let us know what we can do to improve our endeavors or if you are interested in joining our Committee. Our regular presence on Sunday mornings to greet folks as they arrive is a joy, so we hope to see you in our new building. For now, we are asking everyone to wear masks, even in our well ventilated meeting room. Also for now, children are not meeting in their new Religious Exploration spaces and have activities outside on the church's grounds or in parks with DRE Alice Mandt, RE Chair Karen Deaton, and/or the RE teachers.

Since Prairie UU Society began in person Sunday services this past July, we are fortunate to have had a number of new people attend, including families with children. And, wonderfully, seven have signed the Member Book or will very soon. The Membership Committee is getting together soon to talk about hosting a couple Newcomer and New Member Orientations, one will be in person and another over Zoom. What makes this more fun and exciting is that Prairie UU's new minister the Rev. Matt Aspin will be joining us in hosting the Orientations. We will publicize those dates closer to when they occur, to encourage one or two others to join us, if they are so inclined.

With President Rachel Long's encouragement, the Membership Committee started in August to gather names of Prairie folks who are interested in joining Circle Dinners, a decades-long tradition of small groups of Prairie UU members and friends to share meals together. We are forming the small groups from the thirty plus people at the end of August, so they can get started in September and eat together, outside, if need be. Although the pandemic may cause us to shelter in place during the winter months, hopefully the Circle Dinners can gather, at least, in the warmer months of the Fall and Spring, in person outside, or possibly over Zoom, to share warmth and conversation.

Let Deesa Pence or Patty Stockdale know at membership@uuprairi.org if you are interested in joining a Circle Dinner Group, as we can add you, or are interested in joining the Membership Committee.