

Prairie Fire

November
2021



Nevenah Smith commissioned and installed a memorial to her father Galen Smith. Photo taken by Barbara Chatterton-Frye.

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November Calendar

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

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Tuesday 2

- 1p Rev. Matt's Chats (every other Tuesday)
- 7p Trivia (1st Tuesday)

Wednesday 3 (every Wednesday)

- 7:30p Rev. Matt's Chats

Friday 5 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Advanced D&D

Saturday 6

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

Sunday 7

- 10a Mini Service & Prairie Auction

Monday 8

- 7p Study Group: *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond

Sunday 14

- 10a Service: "What Can YOU Do About Climate Change?" by Ankur Desai (sponsored by BadgerTalks)

Sunday 21

- 10a Mini Service & Fall Parish Meeting

Monday 22

- 7p Study Group: *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond

Saturday 27

- 10a Creativity & Connection

Sunday 28

- 10a Service: Guest At Your Table b Prairie

Fall Parish Meeting 11/21/21

Rachel Long, President

Please plan to come to our Fall Parish Meeting, which will be held on Sunday 11/21/21 at about 10:15 am after a brief service. We will be voting to approve the 2022 budget and to elect a Board Member to fill an incomplete term after a Member resigned, among other items.. See you there!



Minister's Musings

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister



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Hello all! I very much enjoyed receiving all of those wonderings for the Question Box sermon the other week. One question I didn't have time to cover was, "Many people think ministers only work on Sunday morning. Tell us a bit about what you'll be doing for Prairie the rest of the time so we can fully appreciate your work!"

I've spent the first few months focused on meeting with folks, forging new relationships, and doing a lot of listening. I'm trying to learn what makes this place truly unique, your hopes for the future of this community, and what capacities exist to help bring those dreams to life. What I have learned so far has validated my initial impressions-this community is amazing, you have a long and rich history of supporting one another through the trials and tribulations of life, and you are eager to expand your influence in support of the Madison community and to the wider world .

As we've entered the budget season, I have been reminded that you have made some collective decisions in the past (renovating your building, hiring a full-time minister, to name just a few) that were part of a longer-term vision to strengthen and expand the life-supporting ministry of this place for the future. Each of these required a stretch (what some might call a leap of faith) if you are going to bring these things to life. Well, you have a beautiful building, you've hired a minister...it's all systems GO!

And then...Covid just keeps doing it's darndest to thwart your dreams. Have no fear, my friends. "What I've been doing with the rest of my time" is trying to plant all of the seeds needed to ensure you are ready to bloom once the winter of Covid has passed. The Committee on Ministry is reviewing your mission and will soon begin to evaluate how well we are delivering on that vision. I have been working on a Press Release and a marketing strategy to spread the word about what makes this amazing community unique so that we can begin welcoming others that might be looking for your unique offerings into this supportive space. I'm making connections with the other UU churches and various non-profit leaders around Madison. I'm exploring ways to expand your social media presence, and we continue to look for solutions that will allow us to offer both in person AND virtual experiences once life returns back to a new normal. We're beginning to increase opportunities for small group ministry (the heart of any community such as this). You may not see all of these small steps, but the seeds are being planted and will be ready to sprout before you know it.

Stay the course, my friends. You have a rich and compelling history. And as hard as it is to imagine, there is reason to believe that Prairie's brightest days are still ahead.



Reverend Matt's Chats

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister

With a goal of expanding and deepening relationships amongst us all, I've been offering a time for facilitated online community connection. After the first 2 sessions, the Tuesday afternoon gathering has decided to become a more formal [Covenant group](#).



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The next drop in Chats are scheduled for Wed, Nov 3rd, during the day from 1-2, or an evening session from 7:30-8:30. New members and visitors are especially welcomed to attend...this is a great way to begin to deepen your connections with others in our community.! So...what do you want to talk about?

Virtual PLUS In Person?

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister



Even though we said we just can't do it, a few folks have requested that we keep trying to find a way to continue virtual services when we return to meeting in-person. Some of us have difficulty, or don't feel safe meeting in person, and for them the virtual meetings have been greatly appreciated. Not to mention...this is a REALLY helpful way for folks that are checking us out to "dip a toe in the water." Our valiant regular tech guru, John Wunderlin, would need help once we are back on site to make this wish a reality. Folks have suggested hiring additional help, but the budget REALLY doesn't appear able to handle that yet. I am going to do all that I can to support this effort, but what we really need is...YOU! I've researched some ways that we might be able to do a version of this with less support needed than a full hosted Zoom meeting, but we still need a group of volunteers to commit to lend a hand. Email minister@uuprairie.org if you're looking for a tangible way to really make a difference in our community today.

Cultivating Community through Social Media

Katrina Thompson

As most of you know, I manage Prairie's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts. Recently, Rev. Matt has joined me in adding content to Prairie's Facebook page. Since folks who are already involved in Prairie get most of their Prairie-related news from our two email lists, we'd like to use social media in a more targeted way to attract new folks to our community.

How can you help?

There are two ways you can help promote Prairie on social media: the first won't take you any time if you're already on Facebook or Twitter, and the second will only take a few minutes.

1. If you see a post from Prairie, please interact with it in some way: "like" it, share it, or leave a comment. Because of the way social media algorithms work, doing so will help Prairie to become more visible to others.
2. I think what makes Prairie unique among Madison's UU churches is our sense of community or even family-ness. I'd like to use this theme on Facebook more to try to highlight who we are and why newcomers might be interested in checking us out. With that in mind, I'd love to collect some quotes from Prairie members and friends that I could use in posts. If you're interested in sharing your thoughts, please fill out this [short questionnaire](#). Thank you!



Continuing to Adapt to Covid

Rachel Long, President

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As many of you heard on prairienews, we are following UUA guidelines to meet virtually when the Covid transmission rate is “Very High” or higher per the Covid Act Now website - https://covidactnow.org/us/wisconsin-wi/county/dane_county/?s=24061319.

This is our current procedure:

Dane County, WI

Updated on October 24

RISK LEVEL ⓘ
● HIGH

Daily new cases

● 19.3 PER 100K

Infection rate

● 0.88

Positive test rate

● 3.4%

We will make a tentative decision each Tuesday for how we will meet on the following Sunday. Making a decision on Tuesday gives the Program and RE Committees time to coordinate musicians, presiders, tech needs, and teachers. We will plan to meet in person once the transmission level reduces to “High” or lower for at least 7 days (by Tuesday) in order for us to be confident that the trend is clear. However, even if the decision is made to meet in person, we will continue to monitor, and if the transmission rate rises again to “Very High” or higher between Tuesday and the following Sunday, we will pivot back to meeting virtually. We will announce the tentative decision on Tuesdays on Prairienews.

The final announcement about how we will meet will be made by noon each Saturday and announced on Prairienews and on our website. Let me know if you have any questions.

Administrator Change in Status

Rachel Long, President

Our long-serving, beloved Administrator Dan Klock has had to move a couple of hours away from Madison quite unexpectedly this past week. Our Minister Rev. Matt and I have been talking with Dan and the Board to decide how to proceed. We have decided to continue with Dan working remotely as our Administrator for the time being. Matt will be working with our other staff members Raju Eliganti and Alice Mandt to see how many of Dan's handful of on-site tasks they can absorb, and which (if any) will need to be done by committees or other volunteers



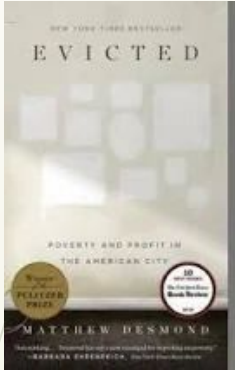
We will be working closely with Dan to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Our plan is to evaluate in 6 weeks (around November 30th) whether to continue the relationship indefinitely, or to open a search for a new Administrator who would be able to be on site. While we intend to gather specific feedback from those that end up having tasks assigned, we also want to hear from anyone that experiences problems and generally how well this new arrangement seems to be working.

Study Group Upcoming Selections

Rachel Long, President

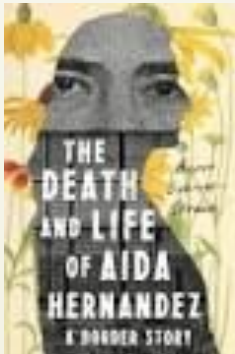
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All are welcome to join Study Group on zoom every 2nd and 4th Monday at 7-8:30 pm for discussion of any or all of our selections. See the website for the link. Upcoming selections for this fall:



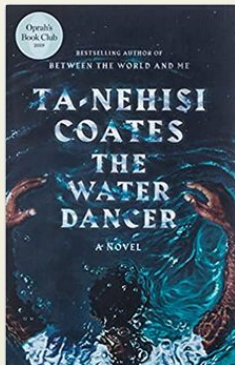
NOVEMBER - *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond, led by Suzanne Gernandt

"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



JANUARY - *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, led by Morris Sadacarrio

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER • OPRAH'S BOOK CLUB PICK • From the National Book Award–winning author of *Between the World and Me*, a boldly conjured debut novel about a magical gift, a devastating loss, and an underground war for freedom. "This potent book about America's most disgraceful sin establishes [Ta-Nehisi Coates] as a first-rate novelist." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

Study Group Calendar - Every 2nd and 4th Monday at 7-8:30 pm

November 8 & 22 - *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond

December 13 - *Aida Hernandez* by Aaron Bobrow-Strain

January 10 & 24 - *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

February 14 & 28 - *Behind the Kitchen Door* by Saru Jayaraman

March - 14 & 28 - to be determined

April 11 & 25 - *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman

May 9 & 23 - to be determined

There is still room for YOUR book in the spring. Let me know what selection you would like to lead!

Rachel Long, President
Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society

Religious Exploration (RE)

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

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November is Native American Heritage Month, or as it is commonly referred to, American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month.

This month in Religious Exploration children will be examining through a variety of mediums the rich culture and history of Native people in Wisconsin and throughout the country.

According to the National Congress of American Indians, “Native American Heritage Month celebrates rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people. Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about tribes, to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges Native people have faced both historically and in the present, and the ways in which tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges.”

Before we get too far, I’d like to answer a common question: To honor the culture correctly do you say Native American or American Indian?

Native American, American Indian and Indigenous Peoples are all used, even within the community. Many prefer their tribal affiliation (like Lakota people, Sioux, Cheyenne, etc.) to generalized terms. Some Native Americans prefer one term over the other, so if you’re unsure, just ask!



7 Ways to Learn & Honor Native American Heritage & History

- Discuss the REAL Thanksgiving
- Teach Native American studies the right way
- Understand the importance of Native American Storytelling
- Tackle Native American stereotypes
- Don't just focus on historical Native Americans
- Sample some authentic Native American food
- Have fun but be clear and intentional about your Native American crafts and projects

Prairie Auction November 7th

Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair

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The Prairie auction will be **Sunday November 7th**. We are optimistic about an in-person auction. We have received lots of great items for the auction. We have beautiful hand knit items, dinners, gift cards, art, cookies...But we can use more of everything! The auction is just two weeks away. **Submit your items now!** If you have any questions contact Chris Porter at finance@uuprairie.org or Suzanne Gernandt at treasurer@uuprairie.org.

Below are a chullo hat, teal cowl, wrist warmers and RBG collar made by Peggy Small that you can bid on, November 7th!



Auction items from Lynn Currie.



8 New Members Welcomed at Prairie on 10/3

Mary Mullen & Patty Stockdale

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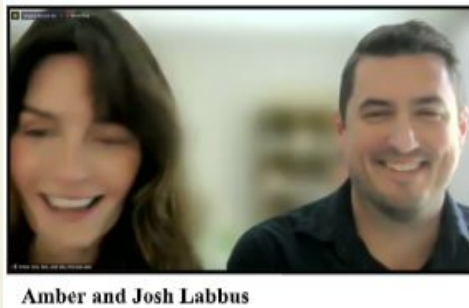
Sunday, October 3, was a red-letter day for Prairie as it welcomed three couples and two other individuals as new members to our community. In the order that they spoke at the Zoom service, they are Ilene and Peter Haykus; Amber and Josh Labbus who have a baby son, Jack; Mary Massey; Andrea and Tim Scott, who have three children, Trevor, Amelia, and Aiden; and Tami Bucholtz, who joined by phone.

In his brief remarks, Rev. Matt Aspin spoke of how they were joining a tradition stretching far back in history, not just the history of this congregation, but back many centuries.

Here's a tidbit of information about each, mostly from their remarks to the congregation.



Ilene Haykus spoke for herself and her husband Peter. They were 25-year members of the Pagosa Unitarian Unitarian Fellowship <https://pagosauu.org/>, in Pagosa Springs, CO. In March of this year they moved to Madison to be closer to their daughter. The Haykuses chose Prairie because of its size. Ilene likes our “lack of judgment.” Now, don’t take that wrong. That phrase means lack of judging people. In her past congregation, she found that the more she participated, the more she got from her church. She looks forward to participating in Prairie.



Amber Labbus did most of the speaking for herself and her husband Josh. Both were raised in other religions, Roman Catholic, I believe. They have lived in Madison for 10 years. They were attracted by our commitment to service and have found us to be a warm and welcoming place and open-minded as well. Not having “absolute certainties” is what she likes. Amber and Josh’s baby son Jack made a cameo appearance dressed in a bright yellow outfit that previously had belonged to Ian Park when he was a baby some 38 years ago. Barbara Park had passed on several outfits



Mary Massey, who has been attending Prairie off-and-on for several years and often participated in the annual service auction, looked for people who are allied with her beliefs. That turned out to be us. She’s a dedicated gardener.



Tim and Andrea Scott. Their children (at a younger age) are pictured above Andrea's head: Trevor, Aiden, and Amelia.

Andrea Scott spoke for herself and husband Tim. Their 8-year-old Trevor had started asking questions of a religious nature. That and the fact that Prairie was conveniently located to their home brought them to us. They have two younger children, Amelia and Aiden. They all walk across Marlborough Park to attend when Prairie is in-person. To make it easier for them to take part in the Zoom welcoming service, Membership Chair Patty Stockdale rode her bike across the park with 4 1/2 -year-old Haku to take the Scotts' 3 children to Belmar Park for the duration.

While the eighth member Tami Bucholtz attended the Zoom service by phone, unfortunately, she could not participate either visually or by speaking. Rev. Matt briefly introduced her. She has attended in person starting with this summer's meeting at Mendota Park where we gathered to meet our new minister. Previously, for about 10 years, Tami attended an UU congregation in another state that was very active in social justice issues.

The Prairie community extends its warmest welcomes to each of these new members and their families. We hope that your association with Prairie turns out to be one of best decisions you have ever made.

The Membership Committee includes Deesa Pence and Patty Stockdale as co-chairs and Morris Sadicario as a committee member and is welcomed to any new participants (contact membership@uuprairie.org). Our primary duties include greeting visitors with a warm smile and a "Good Morning" on Sunday Mornings when we meet in-person and offer information to those curious about Unitarian Universalism and Prairie UU Society and/or interested in becoming a member.



Membership Co-Chair Patty Stockdale leaves the Scotts to ride back home with Haku after doing childcare during the new member welcoming service

Images in this newsletter article are screenshots by Mary Mullen