

Prairie Fire

January
2022



A group of Prairie Members & Friends went caroling on 12/18 thanks to Katrina Thompson's auction item.

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

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December Calendar

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

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Sunday 2

- 10a Service: “Winter Wishes For The New Year” by Prairie

Tuesday 4

- 7p Trivia (1st Tuesday)

Wednesday 5 (every other Wednesday)

- 1p Rev. Matt’s Chats
- 7:30p Rev. Matt’s Chats

Friday 7 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Advanced D&D

Saturday 8

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

Sunday 9

- 10a Service: Rev. Matt Aspin

Monday 10

- 7p Study Group: The Water Dancer by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Sunday 16

- 10a Service: Rev. Matt Aspin

Saturday 22

- 10a Creativity & Connection

Sunday 23

- 10a Service: Buddhism by Lisa Glick

Sunday 30

- 10a Service: TBA



Here Alice Mandt, Deesa Pence and Rev. Matt Aspin take a quick break in between moving RE supplies/furniture from The Annex to the Meeting House lower level on December 18th 2021.



Furniture RE did not plan to use was place on the curb for others to pick up (the pews went fairly quickly).

Study Group

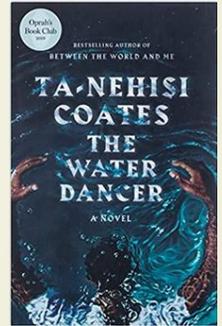
Rachel Long, President

We've changed our schedule, and are now meeting only once per month on the second Monday from 7-8:30 pm. See our website for the link. Please join us!

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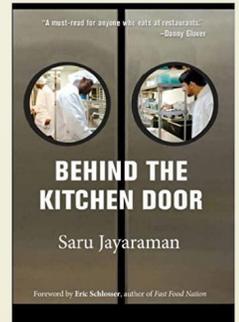
JANUARY - *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, led by Morris Sadacarrío

#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*



FEBRUARY- *Behind the Kitchen Door* by Saru Jayaraman, led by Katrina Thompson

"For all its talk of organic foods and sustainability, the restaurant industry pays little mind to the health and welfare of its own low-wage employees. In this persuasive volume, Jayaraman draws attention to servers, bussers, runners, cooks, and dishwashers across the country 'struggling to support themselves and their families under the shockingly exploitative conditions that exist behind most restaurant kitchen doors.'... Jayaraman champions employee causes and argues fervently against discrimination, giving restaurant owners, diners, and readers considerable food for thought."
—Publishers Weekly



Study Group Calendar (7pm 2nd Monday of the month)

January 10 – *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

February 14 – *Behind the Kitchen Door* by Saru Jayaraman

March 14 – *Let the Record Show* by Sarah Schulman

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

May 9 - to be determined



A Christmas Helper Elf (Nancy Wunderlin) put up lights, assembled the tree and more as part of an auction item. Photo taken by Nancy Wunderlin.



Karen Deaton and Alice Mandt help assemble Nifty Gifty bags. Photo taken by Nancy Wunderlin.

Rev. Matt's Musings

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister



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As happens every year around this time, we look at the calendar and say, "How did another year slip by already?"

This was a year in which time seemed especially fluid. The first 4 months seemed to drag on forever as we awaited a vaccine that we hoped would free us from our isolation. Time sped up during a brief wave of elation as we began to think the pandemic would soon be in our rear-view mirror, and then time began to slow again as we came to realize that some challenges can only be overcome if a majority of individuals are willing to come together for betterment of all.

As we now settle into the longest nights of the year, still stuck in these confusing, liminal times, I am also reminded of the many joys that continue to bring light into our hearts each day. I have had the joy of being welcomed into so many of your homes, and begun to get a glimpse of the many wonderful stories you have created together over the years which have combined to make this Prairie community a true gift for anyone lucky enough to have found its welcoming embrace.

To close out this year, (which, like every year, has been filled with both unexpected joys and the natural sorrows of inevitable loss), I would like to offer a blessing as we peer forward together with hope into our next collective journey around the sun:

This is a blessing for you,
But it is also a blessing ABOUT you.
Because the truth is, YOU are the blessing.
Not just because of what you do (which is a lot),
Not just because of how you love (which is fully)
And not just because of how hard you try (which we know is always your best),
But rather just because of who you are.
You are the blessing. You are a miracle. Just you.
And this community is blessed by nothing more than your presence.
May we all be blessed in this coming year with the chance to more easily connect with
each other.
Because as we have been reminded so clearly over these past months...
There is no greater gift in all the world than simply to be together with the ones that we
love.

Hold steady, dear ones. We will get through this long night together. And as long as we stay connected, there are surely many more bright days to be created ahead.

Religious Exploration (RE)

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

I am excited to announce that Religious Exploration will resume activities in Prairie's basement (the RE space) starting January 9th!

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Here are the plans for each age group:

- **TINIES (0-4):** For children under 2 we will ask that they accompany their parent or caretaker to the meeting room or that the parent or caregiver accompanying the child to join the 2-5 year olds either outside or in the Annex living room. The 2-5 year olds will continue to start their days in RE outside in Prairie's backyard. We will also have space in the Annex's living room for when the weather does not allow for outside activities. The living room in the Annex will also have a HEPA filtration unit. All ages will be asked to wear masks.
- **LITTLES (5-7):** Our young children will be engaging with the Chalice Children curriculum, which strives to build community amongst the youngest of our prairie community and also encourages the formation of a Unitarian Universalist identity, through games, stories, and art projects.
- **BIGS (7-10):** The Bigs will be doing games and sports with a focus on cooperative play, inclusion, and empathy. While enjoying games and physical activities together, we'll find teachable moments to focus on developing skills of perseverance, self regulation, and conflict resolution - skills to help us build a strong community.
- **YOUTH (11+):** In the first three sessions the youth will be exploring what a covenant is and how to create their own, identity and how it affects their lives, and intersectionality, how the different aspects of their identities interact. Later on in the winter the youth will be discussing systemic racism and how to impact the church community at prairie and beyond.

RE still needs volunteers to help our vision for January and beyond happen!!

[SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER!!!](#)

Nifty Gifty Elves assembled and delivered activity kits for Prairie youth. Assembling instructions were then held via Zoom on Friday December 3rd and Saturday December 4th.



Prairie's New Portable Dance Floor Arrived!

Martin Arnold

Our new carpeted meeting room floor has many benefits, but it is certainly not an ideal dance floor surface. Luckily, due to a very generous gift by longtime Prairie member Nancy Schraufnagel, we now have a high quality portable dance floor that is kept on a cart in the meeting room storage closet and can be quickly assembled (20 minutes in our first attempt with 4 people) from 25 4x4ft panels which are locked together to form a beautiful sturdy 20x20ft dance floor. Many thanks to Randy Converse, Lynn Currie, Bob Park, Ken Skog, John Wunderlin, and Morris Sadicario for help with transport and assembly/takedown. We look forward to many future dance extravaganzas!

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Nancy Wunderlin and Barb Park with the unassembled dance floor pieces. Picture taken by Deesa Pence.



Lynn Currie, Ken Skog, John Wunderlin and Martin Arnold pose with the new dance floor. Picture taken by Nancy Schraufnagel.



Prairie Small Group Offerings

Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society not only gathers Sunday mornings for services at 10 am (uuprairie.org), but also has a number of other ways to gather with, to learn from, and to socialize with each other.

Below is a list of existing small groups. If you do not see something that piques your interests, let us know and we will try to help organize a small group. Just suggest a topic and be willing to lead with others periodically. In the past, Prairie UU had some small groups that could be revitalized and include such groups as movie discussion, poetry writing and discussion, LGBT, parents of small children, and Spanish speakers. If safe conditions exist, the groups can meet in one of Prairie's UU two buildings or virtually over Prairie's UU's Zoom account.

Arts and Crafts Group: This group typically meets monthly on Saturday afternoons, either in person or on Zoom. It is led by one of the participants with an art or craft project of their own choosing. The leader provides the materials and instructions. Contact Kathy Converse at conversekrtn@gmail.com

Circle Dinners: These groups consist of 6 - 8 members and friends who bring food dishes to share to make a meal in each others' homes. Prairie's buildings can be used if allowed given current restrictions of the pandemic. Contact Patty Stockdale at pstockdale828@gmail.com

Creativity and Connection: This group is open to anyone who wants to explore creative projects without pressure. We welcome any level of artistic ability, but projects are typically best for ages 8 and up. Projects can vary from writing to drawing to crafting. The focus will be on the creative process rather than the outcome, but there will be an opportunity to share your project at the end (optional). This group meets over Google Meet monthly. Each month is something different so both regular and intermittent attendance are welcome. Contact Peggy Small at pmsmall79@gmail.com.

Dungeon and Dragons: This group is open to anyone who has played DND and knows how to create a character. Bring a character and dice (lots of options for free virtual dice if you don't have physical dice). This group meets over Zoom weekly on Fridays from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Regular attendance is encouraged to keep up with the current adventure. Contact Peggy Small at pmsmall79@gmail.com to be connected with DM Harlan.

Game Group: This group of members and friends meets monthly either at participant's homes or over Zoom and plays an assortment of games. Participants bring games to share with the group. Contact Deesa Pence deesapence@gmail.com.

Guys' Group: Prairie "guys" meet the first Wednesday of the month to share news and discuss a pre-announced topic. In-person meetings are held at the Prairie Annex; virtual meetings on Zoom are held when necessary. Originally the Men's Group, we welcome all interested members and friends. Contact Dan Proud at derrproud@att.net.

Rev. Matt's Midweek Chats: These chats offer a space where Prairie members can drop in to touch base, develop new connections, and potentially have some interesting discussions along the way. No long term commitment required, just a desire to connect, share a bit of your story, and maybe even learn a thing or two. Contact Rev Matt Aspin at minister@uuprairie.org

Study Group: This group reads and discusses a book each month to become educated on race, class and other issues of injustice and oppression. Study Group is part of Prairie's initiative to become a more truly welcoming congregation to those of all ethnic and class backgrounds, genders and sexual orientations, as we strive live out our 1st principle, to respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and our 2nd principle, the goal of justice, equity and compassion in human relations. Contact Rachel Long at raarlong@gmail.com.

Trivia: Trivia currently meets the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm virtually. Each attendee brings a trivia question to share to the group. We normally break up into 2 or 3 teams depending on the number of attendees. Contact Renee Deschard at reneedeschard@gmail.com.

Walking Group: This group meets weekly in most weather conditions to walk in various parks or nature areas around Madison. Walks are 1 to 2 hours and are gentle and involve friendly conversations. Contact Kathy Converse at conversekrtm@gmail.com.

WOW: Women of Wonder group meets monthly on the first Saturday morning of each month. The women's social group shares general discussion often of a personal nature either on Zoom or in person when permitted. In person gatherings are held at Prairie's Annex and participants bring a breakfast dish to share. Contact Kate Liu at kgliu311@gmail.com.

Prairie Musicians Have Become a Regular Feature of Sunday Services (you can perform too!)

Mary Mullen, Archive Committee Chair

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In the past few weeks, attendees at Prairie Sunday Zoom services have been treated to musical numbers by Prairie members.

Take this past Sunday, December 19. Dan Proud, Deesa Pence, Barbara Park, and Morris Sadicario sang a Christmas song. We saw their still photo as they sang. They had recorded it at Amber's home. This group also performed by recording during the service the week before. On this same Sunday, Carl Wacker and Paula Pachciarz performed an original song that encouraged people to help out in the Religious Exploration program. We all waited with bated breath for the next line. There was a video recording of their live performance in front of the Christmas tree in their home.

Previously, a group of five – Dan Proud, Deesa Pence, Patty Stockdale, Mary Mullen, and Barbara Park – made video recordings of several pledge songs that were presented on Sunday mornings.

John Wunderlin is another regular performer, playing his French horn; and, of course, Amber often plays the prelude, congregational hymns, and any other special music on various Sundays. She performs on both piano and saxophone.

Any Prairie member or friend may volunteer to perform. While it's a great way to enrich our Sunday services, it's also fun to get together to work up a piece. Performances can be audio only, video, or even in person. Let Nancy Wunderlin know if you want to provide music on a Sunday.



This group worked up several songs to encourage Prairie folks to pledge for the annual budget. They recorded their performances on video on a cell phone. Deesa Pence and Dan Proud play guitars and Mary Mullen plays her ukulele to accompany the group which also includes Patty Stockdale and Barbara Park. All five sang. The recording session was held at the Parks' home. Still photo extracted from video on Patty Stockdale's cell phone.



Dan Proud, Deesa Pence, Barbara Park and Morris Sadicario made an audio recording that was part of the December 19, 2021, Sunday service. Photo is Mary Mullen's screenshot of a photo shown on Zoom.



Carl Wacker and Paula Pachciarz recorded a video of their original Religious Exploration volunteer recruiting song. It was played on December 21. Words showed on the screen. Screenshot by Mary Mullen is from Zoom.

Social Action Committee Report

Pam Gates & Molly Plunkett, Social Action Co-Chairs

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The Social Action Committee has met twice since May, once in person & once via Zoom.

1. We will maintain our focus on services to homeless people, mainly by sharing our Sunday offerings with different local agencies.
2. We agreed to establish a basket for collecting sample-size personal-care items that Porchlight will distribute to its homeless guests. We will also collect other items for The Road Home and possibly other homeless service providers as soon as meeting in person at Prairie is predictable.
3. We will offer to host a MOSES monthly meeting as soon as they meet in person and are looking at widening our circles of concern by holding social justice events of our own and inviting the wider community: e.g., a big-name speaker, a panel on homelessness, a forum between MPD officers & Freedom Inc., etc.. Any such projects would be in consultation with the Program Committee.
4. Prairie continues its MOSES membership through Pam Gates' representation, and its work with Allied Wellness and Allied Partners through Molly Plunkett.

Social Action continued to be active in Allied Partners and the Allied Wellness Center. Molly is on the board for both. Allied Partners continues its work supporting the neighborhood by maintaining a fund for JFF to use to help people facing eviction and funding scholarships for any post high school education of \$500 per semester. The Allied Wellness Center has trained a group of local women to be Community Health Workers. They have been very involved in distribution of food packages from 2nd Harvest (now 15 pounds) and other sources for last six months. In the last 3 months they have added monthly delivery of personal care and household cleaning supplies to the food package delivery. They have also assisted in a variety of vaccine clinics in the area.

Circle of Support

Molly Plunkett, Social Action Committee Co-Chair



A project of Just Dane, Circles of Support pull together people who want to support a prisoner (the "core member") who is returning to the community. Both Pam Gates and I went through the training to become group members some time ago. The group meets weekly and tries to provide emotional and practical support for every day issues faced by a former felon. I have been a member of a Circle of Support for several months and think it is worth reporting on. My group of 3 women and two men supports a 39 year old man (MM) who lives and works in Jefferson County. Meetings are held on a zoom platform and last 1.5 hours. After a check in period, topics usually covered include meetings the core member has with his Parole Agent (P.O.) and problems there may be, report on his work, housing issues, and issues with his family. Our core member has been out of prison for several years, is employed in Jefferson, and lives in a house with other ex-offenders. Because he is a sex offender, any event or gathering where children will be present, must be approved in advance by his PO. SO offender status also makes it very hard to find housing where he might be able to live with his girlfriend and their young child. Group members have offered to go bat for our core member with his PO who can be very slow to make decisions. Frequently, we make suggestions about how to communicate more effectively with his PO. Group members were invited to the baptism of MM's youngest child. We problem solve with him about housing options he might have. Currently we are talking about how he might regain contact with his older children who live in the Milwaukee area. It helps me to be reminded of the humanity of prisoners and former prisoners.

Archives Committee Report

Mary Mullen, Archives Committee Chair

Archives Committee members: Mary Mullen, Robert Park, Barbara Park, Rosemary Dorney

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The Archives Committee has not been meeting, but as individuals, we carry out archives-related activities. In particular, since the May 23, 2021, Parish meeting, Bob Park has continued to process each Sunday's service audio recording, posting public recordings of the speaker's part at <https://uuprairie.org/audio/index.htm> and adding as much of the full service as has been recorded on Zoom to the password protected Member's Page on the Prairie website. Bob also has posted 48 orders of service (OOS) turned over to him from Rosemary Dorney. These and other OOS documents are fully searchable. Periodically, Bob makes suggestions for improvements of Prairie's website. Mary Mullen and Bob add information to the yearly online Chronology to keep it up to date.

Mary Mullen created the first exhibit in the Archives display cabinet. It features two displays. One is the two volumes of our history book: *Prairie UU Society: 50 Years in the Life of a Congregation, 1967-2017*. The books are available for sale in the lobby: The \$25 price for 966 pages with 850 illustrations is very reasonable. The second display is a framed copy of Unitarian martyr Rev. Victor Capek's hymnbook. It includes a photo his grandson Lee Haspl who is handing the hymnbook to former minister Ralph Tyksinski.

Many of Prairie's archives, including the remaining copies of the history books, are currently stored at committee members' homes. The committee is hoping that it will soon be possible to return this material to either the meeting house or the Annex. We are getting a little impatient after having it in our homes for about seven years.

Housing & Property Committee Report

Randy Converse H&P Committee Chair

Chair: Randy Converse

Members: Al Nettleton, John Wunderlin (liason to the Board), John Gernandt, Heidi Hughes, Gene Kane, Morris Sadicario

Staff: Raju Eligante

Works Completed or In Progress:

- Raju kept buildings and grounds clean, and well mowed
- Fence around new HVAC equipment behind Meeting House is being designed with plans to construct in spring of 2022
- Porches of Annex and Annex exterior were power washed by Raju
- Estimate have been done on repair of Meeting House fascia with plans to do work in spring of 2022
- Estimate has been done on painting red trim of Meeting House with work to be done in spring of 2022
- Landscape subcommittee rid the backyard of unneeded vegetation
- Repair tasks in Meeting House performed by John and Nancy Wunderlin
- Artwork done by Prairie members placed on Meeting House walls by Barbara Chatterton, Heidi Hughes, and John Gernandt