

Prairie Fire

April
2022



Rev. Matt Aspin speaks on 3/13/2022 at Prairie's first in person service since November 2021.

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April Calendar

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

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Friday 1 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Advanced D&D

Saturday 2

- 10am WOW (Women of Wonder)

Sunday 3

- 10a Mini Service followed by Prairie Service Auction (in person only)

Sunday 10

- 10a MOSES

Monday 11

- 7p Study Group: *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman

Sunday 17

- 10a Service with Rev. Matt Aspin
- 11:30 Board Meeting

Tuesday 19

- 7p Trivia (3rd Tuesday of the month)

Saturday 23

- 10a Creativity & Connection

Sunday 24

- 10a Service with Gary Gates
- 11:45 Humanist Union

Friday 29-May 1st Prairie Retreat

- 6pm check in on Friday
- Sunday am Key Log Service, check out by noon

Humanist Union Meetings Resume

John Wunderlin will be our speaker as we resume our Humanist Union meetings at Prairie. His topic is "Parallels between the anti-racist movement and religious fundamentalism." Join us to hear John's thoughts on what John McWhorter calls 'Third Wave Antiracism'. A lively discussion is sure to follow.

We will meet in person at 11:45 am on Sunday April 24th in the Meeting House, and our meeting will also be carried on Zoom. The Zoom link will be made available on the Humanist Union Coming Events page at <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/events.htm>. All are welcome to join us.



Study Group

Rachel Long, President

We will meet again on Monday, April 11 from 7-8:30 pm. See our website for the link. Even if you haven't read the book, feel free to join us for the discussion. After this selection, Study Group will take a break for now.

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APRIL – Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism, edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman, led by Pegeen Small. Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman, self-described as a "Catholic Cuban-Colombian girl from New Jersey" and a "Pakistani Muslim girl from Queens," offer various perspectives--their own and others--of life lived as young feminists of color, exploring commonalities and cultural differences and examining macho cultures and American capitalism. The essays explore four major themes: family and community; mothers; cultural customs; and talking back to white feminists, men, mothers, liberals, and others. These women express a more radical, racialized feminism that broadens the movement beyond its early incarnation. *Vanessa Bush*



Study Group Calendar (7-8:30 pm on the 2nd Monday of the month)
April 11 – Colonize This! edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman

We will conclude for now after our April selection.

Prairie Study Group Takes On New Topics

Mary Mullen, Archives Committee Chair



Whereas the first year the Prairie Study Group concentrated mainly on Black/white relations, more recently our reading has broadened to include Native American knowledge (*Braiding Sweetgrass*), immigrant experiences (*The Death and Life of Aida Hernandez*), local – Milwaukee – cruel practices in housing (*Evicted*), a novel way of looking at slavery (*The Water Dancer*), and initiatives to counteract the dire consequences in sentencing (*Just Mercy*), discriminatory restaurant practices (*Behind the Kitchen Door*), and in approaches to AIDS crisis (*Let the Record Show, A Political History of Act Up New York, 1987-1993*).

April's book is *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman. It's a collection of essays, recommended by Pegeen Small who will lead the discussion on Monday, April 11 at 7:00 pm.

Participants in the 3/14/22 discussion of the history of ACT UP in New York, 1987-1993, were Rachel Long, Martin Arnold, Mary Mullen, Pegeen Small, Mary Somers, and Ruth Dougherty. The Study Group meets the second Monday of each month at 7 pm by Zoom. Anyone can attend.

The photo shows the group that discussed *Let the Record Show*. This discussion was led by Rachel Long. We started by sharing information we knew about AIDS decades ago. Perhaps the most moving was Mary Somers's experience of visiting San Francisco in 1988. When she and her friend went to the SF City Hall which had lots of steps and concrete areas, they saw people dying of AIDS lying everywhere on the premises. This was not an ACT UP protest: it was simply that these very sick people had nowhere else to go.

Mary also recounted the ACT UP demonstration at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City in 1989 that she had read about at the time. She recalled that some ACT UP demonstrators dressed like priests: One of these was led gently out of the cathedral by a police officer who addressed the man as "Father."

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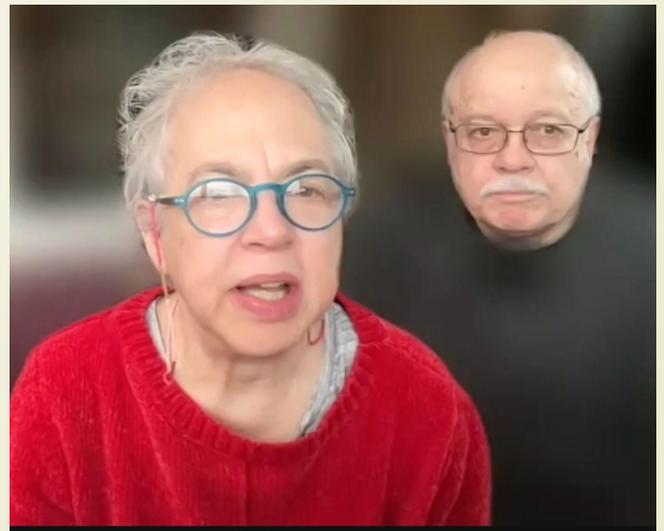
In the mid-80s when Pageen Small when was in need of a transfusion, her doctor advised against it because of "something" in the blood supply. Many people who had been infected with HIV through dirty needles or had AIDS started attending her conservative Christian church which welcomed them. In the 2000s when Pageen was a pediatric nurse, she worked with kids who were HIV positive.

These are just a few examples of how participants bring their own experiences to discussions.

The Study Group generally attracts from five to ten participants. Since September, twenty-one different people have attended, showing that about a fifth of Prairie folks have benefited from the group since September of last year.



The Prairie Women's Group, WOW, meets the first Saturday of each month. Soon the group may be meeting in person again. At the 3/5/22 meeting, ten women enjoyed checking in with each other. They were Robin Proud, Patty Stockdale, Mary Mullen, Kathy Converse, Barbara Park, Kate Liu, Mary Frantz, Susan Herr-Hoyman, Anne Urbanski, and Mary Somers. Susan and her husband Dirk have recently moved back to the Madison area, actually Sun Prairie, and Anne attends from Santa Fe, NM.



Zoom can be fun! At the March 6 Sunday service, Robin Proud presided and Dan Proud presented a reading. Here, Dan appears to be a disembodied head. No one can deny that this is a very striking portrait of the two of them. And, yes, they did give permission to put this amusing Zoom screenshot in the Prairie Fire.

Rev. Matt's Musings

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister



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In this time of great uncertainty, it has been truly healing for many of us to be back together in person, in the beautifully remodeled Prairie space, a container that this community began preparing to hold us long before a global pandemic threw a seemingly endless stream of disruptions into our lives. Dane County's infection rate remains low, and each day that passes is hopefully one day closer the the time when ALL of us can once again feel safe to return to the fold.

The Russian invasion of, and atrocities against, the innocent peoples of Ukraine has come at a moment when the last thing many of us feel we have capacity for is another crisis. Psychologists were saying that the emotional trauma of our unexpected risks, losses, and separation was already going to take a great deal of time and attention to heal. Now we have this new tragedy filling our screens, and our hearts and our minds each day.

In the face of uncertainty, what humans tend to crave is the comfort of familiarity. At this moment in time, I believe coming back together as a community is exactly the kind of comfort we all need. This is not the time to undertake a bold re-imagining of Prairie's mission, or to make massive changes to the elements of our worship service, or anything else that could have the potential to incite passionate debates within our ranks. No, now is the time to just come back together, at least for a spell, and remind ourselves the of healing power available in this beloved community.

Which is not to say we have the luxury of sitting idle. We have no idea how this war might escalate, if the delicate balance of our own democracy will continue to weather the storms roiling from within our own citizenry, or when our rapidly changing climate will reach the tipping point that creates the massive human displacements we've been trying to warn ourselves about for the past half a century.

It is often said that opportunity can be found on the opposite side of crisis. As we begin to come back together, we are reviving some old traditions (I've got my bidder card ready for the auction, and can't wait to attend my first Prairie retreat). We are also offering opportunities for members of this community to make new and expand long-time friendships, learn more about the healing foundations available in this faith tradition, and deepen the spiritual practices that our ancestors learned were critical to maintain health and grounding during turbulent times. In addition to the Article II Study Group and Spiritual Practice discussion groups that have already been announced, stay on the lookout for additional opportunities to make new connections. My intention is to develop a bunch of new offerings, and see what sticks. We will go where your energies flow.

It is the quality of our connections that will give us the strength to weather whatever comes next. And this community has already shown it knows how to create this strong, lasting connections. As more and more new folks come looking for something they know they are missing but aren't sure where to find it, it is the robust small group offerings that we make available that will help to strengthen us most of all.

Come, let us begin again....

Religious Exploration (RE)

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

Dear Prairie Families,

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Prairie RE has returned to meeting in person and we are so very excited. Sunday March 13th was the first time in a long time that we were able to meet together in person and the energy in the basement RE space was amazing. Please join us in the month of April for more fun!

April 3rd - Service Auction Sunday, regular RE will not take place. Children are invited to accompany their caregivers to the auction and childcare will be provided for the youngest children.

April 10th - Regular RE Sunday

April 17th - Easter Egg Hunt. All ages will be together to enjoy some fun spring activities.

April 24th - Regular RE Sunday



Here's what to expect for each age group:

Tinies (ages 0-4): To ensure the health and safety of our community we invite the Tinies to join us in the Annex (or outside in the backyard when weather permits) where we will have circle time, read books, color and play with our friends. Please note that at this time we are asking that children between six months and four years of age refrain from joining the congregation in the meeting room. I recognize the difficulty this may place on families. We are making the best of the current situation, so that exposure remains limited.

Littles (ages 5-7): On Sundays the children will become familiar with the inside of the larger building of which their Chalice Children meeting room is a part and begin to develop a sense of belonging. Every week in this classroom the children will participate in songs, crafts, stories and time for sharing.

Bigs (ages 8-10): The children will engage this spring with some of the big questions that religions grapple with. They'll also have time every Sunday to choose a game or another fun activity to enjoy together.

Youth (ages 11+): The youth will come together to explore issues of social and personal identities. This session will highlight how everyone may experience pain, ostracism, or discrimination, yet feel it within the context of different identities.

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

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

The Auction is Coming!!! (April 3rd)

Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair

Sunday April 3rd at 10 am the 2022 spring auction will be held in the meeting house! We have many great donated items but need many more. Have you offered a popular item in the past that you can repeat? Do you have a new idea? Think of fun, events, themed dinners, treats, adventure, prepared meals, chores, errands, special foods, crafts, art...we've had so many great things at past auctions and it would be wonderful to see great things at this auction!

Some items offered so far - cookies, cupcakes, pie, handcrafted wooden spoons, hand knitted items, brunch, BBQ dinner, Capital Lakes lunch. Need ideas? [Here is the 2019 Auction List.](#)

Submit your auction items soon! [Submitting via the online form 2022 Prairie UU Auction Item Submission \(google.com\) is much appreciated.](#) If the online form is not convenient for you, we have paper forms available at Sunday service, and you can call or email me with your info. You can also email Dan Klock at admin@uuprairie.org. Please be ready to provide details like name, description, value, how many, date, etc. home phone: 608 467 2164 finance@uuprairie.org



Retreat Registration Is Opening Soon

Nancy Wunderlin, Retreat Committee Member

What does crafting, hiking, discussing, an egg hunt, stargazing, making s'mores, singing, a talent show and keylog service have in common? They are all available at the 2022 Prairie UU Retreat April 29th - May 1st 2022! [Please fill out this form by April 4th](#) if you'd like to lead an activity.

Check out [Carl Wacker's 2016 Retreat Video](#) for a nice overview. Online registration (preferred) coming soon! Paper copies will be available at Sunday services on the back hymnal cart (along with paper Auction submission slips). Questions? Please email retreat@uuprairie.org or talk with Nancy Wunderlin, Renee Deschard, Rev. Matt Aspin, Alice Mandt, or Karen Deaton. Hope to see you there!

Widening The Circle Task Force Recommendations-Update

Rev. Matt Aspin & Rachel Long

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As you may be aware, a group of Prairie members spent almost a year together reviewing a lengthy report from the most recent UUA Commission on Institutional Change entitled “Widening the Circle of Concern.” This Commission had been charged by the UUA with “supporting the long-term cultural and institutional change that redeems the essential promise and ideals of Unitarian Universalism.” The Prairie group was tasked by the board to review the UUA Commission’s report and bring back recommendations to the Board about how to make Prairie a more welcoming, equitable, and inclusive community.

This Task Force presented their findings at the September Board meeting, including a 9-page report documenting their prioritized recommendations. Their report identified a wide range of areas where Prairie has opportunity to improve its practices, both to maintain pace with changes happening in society and to widen the circle of different people’s that might find Prairie to be a welcoming spiritual home.

If you’ve not spent a lot of time specifically working embedded within currently marginalized communities, some of these recommendations can come as a surprise. While the Board all agreed that this was important work that needs to be prioritized to ensure that Prairie remains a viable home for all in an increasingly multicultural world, we also agreed that there was some important foundational work that needs to be undertaken to educate and prepare our community to better understand and receive some of the recommendations this report contains. The Board also noted that it is time to update our mission and vision, and we believe that this report will offer strong guidance as we collectively undertake this work.

You can look forward to opportunities to participate in the discussions about Prairie’s mission and vision in the coming months. In support of this effort, we will be inviting members of the Widening the Circle Task Force and the Board to offer a series of short presentations (or full talks) during a stretch of Sunday services between now and the end of the year. This will allow time for members to ask questions about their recommendations, do additional personal research, and begin a process of collective reflection regarding some of the challenges our country continues to face between different communities.

In the meantime, Rev. Matt has already begun implementing some of the WTC recommendations in the background. For example, he is including current best practices regarding minimizing bias during the recruiting, interview, and selection processes as he updates our staff hiring practices.

The Board is grateful for the pivotal work this team did in helping us to consider how the UUA’s report might help to inform Prairie’s future decisions. Stay tuned for more to come as we continuously strive to improve how we do what we do together at Prairie.

Bill Parmenter's Passing

Mary Mullen, Archives Committee Chair

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On Sunday we learned of the passing of former member Bill Parmenter. [His obituary is located here.](#)

References to Bill can be found in Prairie's history books. See photos of him as part of a Circle Dinner group on page 227 and part of the men's group on page 298. He was a regular volunteer cook when Prairie took its once-a-month turn serving breakfast at the men's shelter at the Episcopal Church on the Square, and in the years we sponsored Make Music Madison at Prairie, 2013-2017, he was one of the people behind the scenes to make things run smoothly. He also took his turn at doing sound tech during Prairie services.

More formally, he served as one of the members of a ministerial search committee after Jane Esbensen left us in April 2010, was on the nominating committee in 2014-2015 when that committee was called the Committee on Committees, and was Prairie's Treasurer for a few months in 2015

You'll find out that he was an excellent writer when you read his story "My Journey" on page 700-701 which recounts his journey to becoming a UU. It starts

One day I was traveling down the road to Damascus and I heard a voice speaking out of the desert sand saying, "Why are you persecuting me?" I replied, "You must have mistaken me for Garrison Keillor."

He is fondly remember by those of us who knew him.



