

# Prairie Fire

June  
2022



Our annual auction held on April 3rd 2022. Photo taken by Orange.

## Prairie Contacts

**Rev. Matt Aspin**, Minister — [minister@uuprairie.org](mailto:minister@uuprairie.org)

**Rachel Long**, President — [president@uuprairie.org](mailto:president@uuprairie.org)

**Alice Mandt**, Director of Religious Exploration  
— [dre@uuprairie.org](mailto:dre@uuprairie.org)

**Dan Klock**, Administrator — [admin@uuprairie.org](mailto:admin@uuprairie.org)

**Renee Deschard**, Prairie Fire Editor —  
[prairiefire@uuprairie.org](mailto:prairiefire@uuprairie.org)

Please see [www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org) for other contacts, including board members and committee chairs.

## Table of Contents

Calendar	2
Humanist Union June 5th	2
Spring Parish Meeting Nuggets	3
Summer Fun!	3
Elections to Board and Nominating Committee	4
Finance Committee Report	4
Minister's Report	5
Religious Exploration (RE)	6
Membership Committee Report	7 & 8
Program Committee Report	8
Music Committee Report	9
Housing & Property Committee Report	10
Caring Committee Report	10
Retreat Report	11

# Calendar

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

2

## Thursday 2 (every other Thursday)

- 1p Spiritual Exploration

## Friday 3 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Advanced D&D

## Saturday 4

- 10a WOW (Women of Wonder)

## Sunday 5

- 10a "Transitions Service" by Prairie
- 11:45a Humanist Union

## Monday 6 (every Monday)

- Article II Study Group

## Sunday 12

- 10a Service with Rev. Matt Aspin

## Sunday 19

- 10a Service with Anne Pryor

## Saturday 25

- 10a Creativity & Connection

## Sunday 26

- 10a Service TBA

## Humanist Union Program on Effective Altruism & Capitol Square Farmers Market Info Table

Bob Park and Nick Schweitzer



The next meeting of the Humanist Union will be on Sunday June 5th, from 11:45 to 12:45 in the Meeting House. We will hear UW student Declan Dally talk about "The How and Why of Effective Altruism." He is vice president of the campus group [Effective Altruism UW-Madison](#). He says "I actually am a lifetime attendant of the First Unitarian Society of Madison and have been interested in talking about EA in Unitarian circles for a while now, and would love to do some more connecting of the two." Due to current COVID levels our meeting will not include a potluck lunch

Three Madison groups – the Humanist Union of Madison, the Madison Skeptics, and the Madison Coalition of Reason – have established an information table for humanists, skeptics, freethinkers, atheists, etc., at the Farmers Market on the Capitol Square. Weather and staffing permitting, it will continue every Saturday morning from 9 to noon through November. Staffers engage in discussions with passers-by and provide information about local and national groups, including the four UU congregations in the area. If you're at the market, please stop by the table at the southwest corner of the square, and if you'd like to find out more or to volunteer at the table, please contact Nick Schweitzer, [jnschweitzer@gmail.com](mailto:jnschweitzer@gmail.com).



# Spring Parish Meeting Nuggets

## Rachel Long, President

3

A total of 45 members, including 7 on zoom, plus 2 guests attended our Annual Parish Meeting 5/22/22. We covered a lot of ground:

- We had elections (see separate article.)
- Rev. Matt shared that our Covid team continues active monitoring and decision making about Covid including meeting in person (currently yes), masking (yes), and coffee (no.)
- We announced that negotiations with our minister have been completed, and he will be with us at least through June, 2023.
- We agreed on plans to establish terms for Committee Chairs, with most present preferring 2-year terms.
- We will convene a Bylaws Team to create terms for Chairs and members of the Committee on Ministry.
- Every committee currently has a Board Liaison to facilitate communication, but with Rev. Matt's help (policy work and Human Resources specialist that he is) we will expand that role to provide support to establish policies and procedures for committees so that knowledge isn't lost when people change roles.
- Since we haven't had a planning process to renew our mission and vision since 2008, we started this process with a Board Strategic Planning Retreat in January. The first of several discussion sessions with the congregation was held at the April Retreat.
- The invitation was extended to participate in planning a series of presentations on structural racism and discrimination against other marginalized groups this fall, in anticipation of discussing the recommendations from our Widening the Circle team.
- We are doing great financially with lots of money in reserves, but are currently deficit spending and will need to address our budgeting in the future to be sustainable.
- We accepted Minister and Committee Reports (will be published in the Prairie Fire.)
- We expressed our gratitude for all of those who have given so much to our community in the last year. We especially recognized those leaving leadership positions, including Patty Stockdale who is stepping down as membership Co-chair.

## Summer Fun!

### Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair



Barbara Frye sets out goodies for the Victorian Tea auction item on 5/15. Picture taken by Renee Deschard.

We are planning to have a summer event with a "County Fair" theme. The goal is to raise money for the Prairie budget and have fun with Prairie folks and the wider community. The tentative date is Saturday August 13. We plan to have a silent auction with donated items such as produce, baked goods, crafts, and themed baskets. We hope to have food, music, and children's activities.

We will need many volunteers to make this a success. We need donated items, help with setup and breakdown, music, managing food booth and children's activities.

Will you help us raise funds and spread the fun? Your help will be very much appreciated! Please contact Dan Klock ([admin@uuprairie.org](mailto:admin@uuprairie.org)), Chris Porter ([finance@uuprairie.org](mailto:finance@uuprairie.org)), Suzanne Gernandt ([treasurer@uuprairie.org](mailto:treasurer@uuprairie.org)), or Reverend Matt ([minister@uuprairie.org](mailto:minister@uuprairie.org))

# Minister's Report

## Rev. Matt Aspin



4

Even though Prairie's finances align to the calendar year, as Wisconsin slowly emerges from her long winter and tries to jump straight to summer, it's hard to believe that my first "church year" with you is almost complete.

I arrived here after you had just completed a major building remodel, made the tough decision to hire a full-time minister, and like all of us were trying to figure out how to continue living in the midst of a global pandemic.

Well, the building's great, I've successfully journeyed with you for a spell, and the pandemic...well, 2 out of 3 ain't bad! I think it's safe to say that we all had hoped this one would be checked off our list by this point, but at least we are finding our way forward as the virus morphs and tries it's best to keep us down. Slow, safe, and steady ahead.

A minister's first year is really about building trust, and I hope I've begun to do that. From my perspective this community has exceeded my wildest expectations. You care, you show up, and you love generously. Who could ask for more? Prairie is a wonderful place to be.

Looking forward, we've collectively begun the work of moving from "where you've been" to "where you think you might like to go." I began by dusting off the beautiful Covenant this community created some years ago, and have been using it as the foundation from which we can begin to build what's next.

We've continued the smart work you began during the pandemic to expand small group offerings, the building blocks of any strong community. Expansive conversations are happening, new connections are being made, trust is being deepened even more, and challenging ideas are being discussed. The frame is being strengthened from within.

This community has accomplished a lot since I've arrived (even though much of it has been happening behind the scenes). We have begun to strengthen our policies and procedures to ensure the frame is ready to hold the next big dreams you have for the future. Looking ahead, your Board has begun to initiate conversations that will help you collectively re-imagine what this place is all about and the impact you hope to have in the wider world going forward. Time and resources are always finite commodities, and the Mission and Vision review we undertake in the coming year will help to simplify decisions as we continue to build upon the strong foundation that already exists.

Of course, none of this work happens in a vacuum. Ever increasing environmental concerns, wars raging around the world, deep political divisions fracturing our country and placing many of our hard-fought rights at risk...there is never a shortage of work to be done. There are hard conversations to be had, difficult decision to be made, and plenty of hard work yet to be done. Next year will be about testing, refining, a continuing to deepen the roots that bind us all together.

As we prepare to move into the summer, I encourage us all to pause, and just take a few breaths. The problems see today will still be there when we return in the fall. For now, let us just continue to celebrate our ability to be together, for as long as we can, in whatever ways we can (even if it means masked and without coffee, for the moment). The world needs each of us to be grounded, resourced, and ready to face the inevitable next storms that appear on the horizon that seem bent on testing the strength of this Prairie's roots.

As we continue our journey together, I am eager to see what this community-and each of the individual miracles it contains-will cultivate, grow, and harvest next.

# Elections for Board and Nominating Committee Members

## Rachel Long, President

5

At our Annual Parish Meeting on 5/22/21, we elected new Board and Nominating Committee members. The new members will assume their roles as of 7/1/22.

### Board of Trustees

- President: **Kathy Converse** (1st year of first term)
- Vice-President: **Lynn Currie** (1st year of second term)
- Secretary: **Dan Proud** (2nd year of second term)
- Treasurer: **Suzanne Gernandt** (2nd year of first term)
- At Large: **Karen Deaton & Renee Deschard** (1st year of first term)
- At Large: **Jon Andrae** (starting in the second year of an uncompleted term)

### Nominating committee:

- **Kent Wenger** (2nd year of second term)
- **Paula Pachciarz** (1st year of second term)
- **Heidi Hughes** (2nd year of first term)
- **Rachel Long** (1st year of first term)

I want to express gratitude on behalf of our society to all those who have served us this year, including Board Members, Nominating Committee members, Chairs and members of all our committees, organizers, presenters, technical assistants and readers for our Sunday services, and leaders of small groups. Special thanks to our outgoing At Large Board Members John Wunderlin and Luna Small, and Nominating Committee member Rebecca Strome. You have enriched our lives. And I so appreciated the incredible opportunity to serve as President during this eventful and crazy time. Thank you so much!



## Finance Committee Report

### Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair

We haven't had any significant unplanned expenses. Some budget items are tracking less than expected, but will likely catch up, particularly religious exploration. We may see small savings in a few areas. Prairie has very strong reserves. Right now, we have \$243,000 in the bank. The budget approved plans for using the \$30,000 minister reserve and potentially another \$15,000 of reserves. We did meet the pledge goal of \$130,070. Pledges total \$131,197. We received \$9500 in bids at the auction. Our goal was \$12,500. However, this was a fantastic auction given the continuing uncertainty with having in person events. We will be using reserves. We have enough reserves to meet this budget, but we need to make an effort to control the amount of reserves spent and we need to consider how we will meet spending in future years.

# Religious Exploration (RE)

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

6

It is hard to believe that Summer is already upon us, but I'm excited to see how the children's relationships with one another and their experiences at Prairie grow throughout the summer.



Here's what to expect in Religious Exploration this June:

## **June 5th - Bridging/Transitions Service**

This Sunday families are encouraged and welcomed to join the rest of the congregation in the meeting room for a multigenerational service led by Rev. Matt and myself. It is a Unitarian Universalist tradition to have a Bridging Ceremony that celebrates the transition of our youth from their high school experience into young adulthood. Here at Prairie we continue that tradition with a service dedicated to the transitions in our children's lives. Because we are a small congregation and because we recognize the multitude of changes that all our children have been going through due to the pandemic, we're broadening the traditional Bridging Ceremony into a Transition Service. In keeping with the purpose of this service we would like to make sure that we are including any and all transitions that are important to you and your child(ren). For example: switching schools, conquering a fear, returning to in-person school after being virtual, starting new music lessons, etc. Essentially, we invite you to share with us anything that you or your child(ren) would like our church community to recognize and celebrate. In addition, I will be creating a slideshow for the service and would love to include any photos of your child(ren) that you would like to share. If you would like to contribute something please email me at [dre@uuprairie.org](mailto:dre@uuprairie.org).

## **June 12th - Service Project**

This Sunday children of all ages will gather to make Birthday Kits to be delivered and made available at a local food pantry to the community. We will be asking for donations from the congregation of materials for the birthday kits (cake mixes, decorations, candles, party hats etc.) so please keep your eyes open for a notice coming shortly in Prairie News!

## **June 19th - Juneteenth Celebration**

This Sunday all ages will gather for a Juneteenth Celebration! We will learn about what Juneteenth is and explore how Black Americans have influenced our American and UU Cultures.

## **June 26th - Park Day at Marlborough park**

***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.

If you are interested in volunteering this Summer or even this Fall please contact me!

# Membership Committee Report

**Patty Stockdale & Deesa Pence, Membership Committee Co-Chairs**

7

People involved on the Membership Committee are Deesa Pence and Patty Stockdale as co-chairs; Dan Proud as liaison to the Board; and Rev. Matt as Membership Committee activist and advocate. Others who helped on Sunday morning as greeters include Nancy Wunderlin, Heidi Hughes, and Erin Bosch. Through last fall, Morris Sadicario was an enthusiastic member, greeted folks Sunday mornings, and gladly made name tags.

Please let us know if you are **interested in joining the committee** or if you like to be a greeter on Sunday mornings. The Membership Committee always welcomes those with cheery “hellos” and good “good mornings” to attendees to Sunday mornings services.

Most **duties and responsibilities** of the Membership Committee have resumed to those of the pre-pandemic times. Currently, Prairie is having Sunday services both in-person as well as online. The link is posted on Prairie’s website at [uuprairie.org](http://uuprairie.org).

**New Members and Newcomers:** Periodically, we meet with folks who express interest in joining Prairie UU Society as members. For that purpose, we have prepared information folders for new members to take home to read and keep for future reference. Recently, we welcomed Ruth Dougherty as Prairie’s newest member. We also recognized her in front of the congregation with flowers and “Getting to Know You” song from Oliver, and now others can further welcome her in warm conversation.

The Membership Committee also prepared Visitor Folders available at the Welcoming Table for those who show a little more interest in PrairieUU after attending. The committee meets with them in person or on Zoom, if they desire, to find out more about the church and have any questions answered. In the future, we will have Newcomer gatherings monthly, so newcomers and visitors can conveniently attend after Sunday services.

**Member count:** Our member count currently stands at 109, about a 9% increase, over last year.

**Membership Directory:** The Member Directory continues to be updated and is located in the Members-Only area of the Prairie website at [uuprairie.org](http://uuprairie.org). Please let us know if your **contact information has changed**, so we can keep the directory current. The Members-Only page requires a password, so please ask Dan Klock or Patty Stockdale for the password to view.



Patty Stockdale is stepping down as Membership Co-Chair, Thanks Patty for all of your hard work!

# Membership Committee Report ctned

8

**Circle Dinner Groups:** Each year in late summer and/or early fall, PrairieUU forms Circle Dinner Groups with those interested in sharing meals together. As has most everything, we've been stymied these last couple years because of the pandemic. **The years 2019-2020** was abruptly interrupted in the Spring when most gatherings stopped. That 2020 summer some Circle Dinner groups met outside and socially distanced to share meals. **The years 2020-2021** we formed interest groups as substitutes, so some groups met over Zoom to discuss movies or poetry or make music or art. Also, small groups met outdoors to casually walk or hike on trails or in parks around Madison.

Traditional Circle Dinner groups formed for the **2021-2022** year. Because there were no vaccines yet for the young ones, no families with children joined. In late fall and winter, the year was interrupted again with increased covid numbers. Now some Circle Dinner Groups are sharing meals again as covid numbers decline and the weather warms. The summer months should be opportune for our Circle Dinner Groups to continue sharing meals.

The Membership Committee will begin to plan new Circle Dinner Groups in August for the **coming year 2022-2023** and we hope for a year without interruptions.



April 23 Zentangle auction event, photo taken by Marie Andrae. Pictured left to right: Jesse Garst, Lynn Currie, Andrea Scott, Gwen Pine

## Program Committee Report

**Renee Deschard, Program Committee Chair**

Voting Members: Renee Deschard (Chair), Ron Frye, Suzanne Gernandt, Barb Park, Robin Proud, Rick Ruecking, Nancy Wunderlin

Non Voting Members: Rev. Matt Aspin, Dan Klock

We happily returned to in person services (with virtual viewing option) on March 13th 2022 with "Reconvening" by Rev. Matt Aspin. We continue to have members present on Sundays like Gary Gates "Earth Day - Walking The Talk" on April 24th and external presenters such as Ajay Sethi, "Imagining the Next Normal of the Coronavirus Pandemic" on March 6th. Being on Zoom presented challenges just as going back in person with a virtual viewing option has been challenging as well. The Program Committee continues to strive to provide the congregation with high quality and accessible Sunday services.

Prairie's covid19 team (Rev. Matt, John Wunderlin and Dan Proud) continue to monitor local covid19 numbers and how that impacts in person Prairie services. Please see our website, Facebook and Prairie News listserv for updates (contact Dan Klock at [admin@uuprairie.org](mailto:admin@uuprairie.org) to be added to the Prairie News listserv.)

We thank all of our Prairie presiders, presenters, coordinators, readers, program assistants, musicians, tech & Zoom helpers who make our services so wonderful!



# Music Committee Report

Members: Nancy Wunderlin, Dan Proud, Barbara Park

10

The recently formed Music Committee is a sub-committee of the Program Committee. We've been meeting regularly since July 2021. Throughout the challenges encountered during the pandemic, we always worked towards providing a variety of music that enhanced the Sunday services. In the last year, we had over two dozen Prairie members and youth participate in music performances covering vocals and nearly a dozen different instruments.

We're thrilled to have Prairie's choir back again which started in April of 2022. In the fall, we hope to provide childcare during rehearsals to allow more people to join. We arranged for multiple piano repairs over the last year and are exploring options for possibly rebuilding or replacing our current meeting house piano.

We want to thank Amber for sharing her musical talent and dedication to Prairie. We also want to thank everyone that participated in Prairie's music by either performing, singing in the congregation, enthusiastically clapping or silently appreciating.



Setting up for and participating in the Maypole on 5/8/22. Photo by Renee Deschard.

# Housing and Property Committee Report

**Randy Converse**, Housing and Property Committee Chair

Members: Al Nettleton, John Wunderlin, John Gernandt, Gene Kain, Morris Sadicario, Heidi Hughes, Randy Converse (chair)

9

Tasks completed since Fall 2021 Parish Meeting:

- Recycling center for all brands of oral care products established near Meeting House bathrooms
- Raju diligently kept Meeting House, Annex, and Prairie grounds clean and well-groomed
- Zoom capabilities improved as well as programming on monitor in foyer
- Leaky pipe repaired on coffee machine
- Prairie burned
- Maintenance checks done on all three furnaces
- New Meeting House HVAC unit repaired

On "To Do" List during next six months:

- Install fence around Meeting House HVAC Unit
- Repair stucco on Meeting House
- Repaint/repair trim and fascia of Meeting House

The chair thanks all of the members of the Committee for their skilled efforts!

Randy Converse, Chair



Rose was happy to see the sign honoring her husband, Galen and the successful prairie burn results. Photo taken by Al Nettleton.

## Caring Committee Report

**Barbara Chatterton Frye**, Caring Committee Chair

The Caring Committee has continued to serve our congregation's needs in the past year. We had some overlapping of bringing meals to folks but everyone rallied and we got it done. A big difference is that Rev. Matt has assisted us by connecting with every member and also taking over someone's group for her and filling in for another person who was traveling abroad. This was very helpful to our group to be sure we can continue connecting with everyone.

Patty and Mary took extraordinary care in keeping a recovering person in their house for 2 nights when they saw the need to assist.

Rev. Matt has also offered to set up some training classes with us to guide us in how to best help a family who has just lost someone to suicide and other topics to assist us in helping others.

Please let someone on the Caring Committee know if you discover someone in need who may not have shared it with us.

Thanks,  
Barbara Chatterton Frye  
Caring Committee Chair

# Retreat Report

Renee Deschard & Nancy Wunderlin, Retreat Planners

11

**Retreat planning group:** Renee Deschard, Nancy Wunderlin, Karen Deaton, Rev. Matt, Alice Mandt

**Future dates:** September 29th-October 1st 2023; September 26th-28th 2024 is penciled in (we have the Prairie Center, Barn Center, Farmhouse and Campground for both years)

**Budget:** We did well budget wise. The retreat goal is to break even. The retreat cost in 2023 will be higher due to childcare workers (could not find anyone for 2022) and Bethel environmental programs (the staff were not available in 2022). There was feedback on the survey for a fall retreat, retreat organizers are looking into a mini retreat in Madison on Saturday September 24th and this would be free to attend (using some of the April retreat profit).

**Retreat Income:** \$5,962

Retreat Expense: \$5,279 (note minus a \$700 deposit, we'll need a deposit to reserve 2024)

Profit: \$683

Scholarships - Thanks to the generosity of retreat attendees we gave out 3 partial or full scholarships

## Numbers

Total attendees 2022: 49 adults, 12 kids & 1 baby

Total attendees 2019: 43 adults, 10 kids & 1 baby

**Registration:** We received 2 paper forms and 33 online forms

**Promotion:** Information was posted in Prairie Fire newsletter two separate months, had a Facebook event, was posted to Prairie News multiple times and once to Prairie Views, we had two Sundays with short testimonials from retreat goers.

**Survey Results** (see the full report emailed to News for the Survey results)



Suzanne Gernandt led collaged card making at the retreat. Pictured: Jesse Garst, Kate Liu, Kathy Converse, Suzanne Gernandt, Anne Pryor, Robin Proud, Rick Ruecking, Margit Moses, Nancy Wunderlin and Barbara Frye. Photo taken by Renee Deschard.



A group hike at the retreat. Photo taken by Renee Deschard.