

# Prairie Fire

September  
2022



Prairie members Lynn Currie and Renee Deschard paint pride flags on Magic Pride attendees at Prairie's booth. For more on Magic Pride, see page 7.  
Photo credit: Jeremy Small

## Prairie Contacts

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

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# Calendar

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

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## Friday 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Dungeons and Dragons (online)

## Saturday 3

- 10a WOW (Women of Wonder)

## Sunday 4

- 10a Service: “Labor In The Pulpit” by Frida Ballard and Socorro Cortez

## Sunday 11

- 10a Service: “Ingathering” by Prairie
- 11:30a Parish Meeting

## Sunday 18

- 10a Service: “Destigmatizing Reproductive Justice” by Katrina Thompson, Evelyn Kain, and Pageen Small
- 12p Humanist Union Meeting: “Abortion in Wisconsin: Legal, Ethical, and Political Perspectives”

## Saturday 24

- 10a Creativity and Connection (online)

## Sunday 25

- 10a “Building Our Future” by Prairie
- Building Dedication, Open House, and Fall Fair

# Office Hours

## Rev. Matt Aspin’s Office Hours:

Sun: In-person a minimum of 3 times per month. Available for meetings in the afternoon upon request.

Mon: Consistent in-person office day. Available for meetings upon request.

Tue-Thu: In office or working from home, depending on appointment schedule. Available for meetings upon request.

## Administrator Dan Klock’s Office Hours:

Mon-Fri 11:30am – 2:30pm

## DRE Alice Mandt’s Office Hours:

Mon: 3pm to 7pm  
Wed: 3pm to 7pm  
Thu: 3pm to 7pm  
Fri: 3pm to 7pm



Prairie’s grass wall filled with post it notes of gratuities written or drawn by attendees of Rev. Matt’s August 6 service. See page 8 for more about this service.

Photo credit: Pageen Small

## Editor’s note

Please contact the editor at [prairiefire@uuprairie.org](mailto:prairiefire@uuprairie.org) if you would like to submit an article or photograph to the newsletter. Submissions are due by the 21st of each month for the next month’s edition

# Building Dedication, Open House, and Fall Fair

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Join us Sunday morning for our Building Dedication and Open House, with tours. We will celebrate the creative work and efforts of the many. A Festive Fall Fair to follow welcomes families from the congregation and community with fun activities, food, and raffle.

## Building Dedication, Open House, and Fall Fair

September 25, 2022

10 am to 2 pm

2010 Whenona Dr

Madison, WI

[uuprairie.org](http://uuprairie.org)

Prairie Unitarian  
Universalist Society

# Minister's Musings

Rev. Matt Aspin

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"If I had only one hour to save the world, I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem, and only 5 minutes thinking about solutions."

-attributed to Albert Einstein



I love this oft referenced quote, whether it was actually uttered by this famous scientist or not. Time is such a precious resource in our finite human existence. As the poet Mary Oliver reminds us, it is really important to take the time to intentionally consider what we will do with our "one wild and precious life."

As I begin my second year of ministry in this amazing community, one of the challenges your last Board set for us to focus on this year is a review of Prairie's Mission and Vision. This is an important exercise for any organization to come back to on a somewhat regular basis, and I think it is especially important within the context of a faith tradition such as Unitarian Universalism that is often referred to as a "living tradition" which has professed that "revelation is not sealed." This contrasts with the many other traditions that are based upon a belief that there is a "Divine Plan," which has been set in place since the beginning of time and which we humans are powerless to affect. Our faith tradition calls upon us instead to carefully consider the question posed by the Oliver quote.

This community has achieved a great many things in the past, and those of us who have been lucky enough to find ourselves welcomed into the fold today benefit from all of the dreams, visions, challenges, and hard work that has been undertaken by all who came before to create a place that we sense offers benefits to its current members and also, in its own unique ways, has the potential to make the world a little bit better place because of its existence.

We are not alone in this work. At the same time that we are pondering our future purpose, the voluntary association of congregations like ours (aka "The UUA") is examining the same question. [Click here](#) if you'd like to learn a bit more about the "Article II" commission that has been chartered to consider if our beloved "Principles and Sources" are due for an update.

Stay tuned for many opportunities in the coming year to contribute to these discussions. I'll leave you with a couple of questions to spark your thoughts as we set off to approach this important work:

- What are the problems Prairie exists to solve?
- What do we do, and who do serve?
- What results are we trying to achieve?

"And in our search for peace, maybe we'll finally see...even to question, truly, is an answer."

-Shelley Denham

I am beyond excited to join you in this work and to see what new possibilities emerge.

# Religious Exploration

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

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It has been a great pleasure to spend time with your children this summer at Prairie. I've enjoyed learning, playing, and growing with you and your children! Although summer is almost over, there will not be a shortage of exciting things happening in Religious Exploration this Fall!

That being said, there is going to be quite a shift happening in RE for the fall. Unlike this past fall and spring when children were grouped together by age on Sunday mornings, this fall we will be trying out a workshop model, where all the children will be learning and playing together regardless of age.

Instead of going to separate classrooms (divided by age) after the Story for All Ages, all children will be invited to come together as a community to start their day together. I will lead the children and RE volunteers in Circle Time where we will light our chalice, say our chalice lighting together, and have the opportunity to share something with the whole group. Depending on the Sunday, we will sometimes sing songs together, or children will be invited to bring an item that has meaning to them to share during Circle Time. More than anything, being together at the beginning of our days will help us all greet each other, center ourselves, and prepare ourselves for the activities happening the rest of the day.

After Circle Time, each child will have the ability to choose from 2-3 different workshops run by RE volunteers. The workshops will be 30 minute activities created to provide opportunities for deeper introspection, relationship building, dynamic and cooperative learning, and engagement with our UU history, principles, sources and values through many different activity areas.

Each month we will utilize a broad theme in an effort to provide structure to the month's learning, increase engagement outside of class, and deepen the understanding of and connection to new concepts.

After the workshops are completed, all the children, myself, and RE volunteers will come together at the end and reflect on our time together. We will engage in a silent meditation or reflection, all participants will be given the opportunity to share any joys or concerns they have in regards to their experience in RE that day or in their lives in general, and then we will say our goodbyes.

If you haven't registered your child for Religious Exploration yet, you can do so [here](#).

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer to lead a workshop, do not hesitate to contact me!



Photo credit: [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

## September RE Schedule:

9/4 - Park Day

9/11 - Ingathering (Multigenerational Service, No RE, Children & Youth are invited to join adults in the meeting room for the service).

9/18 - First official day of Fall RE. Participants will create their own Covenant and get to know each other through activities and games.

9/25 - No RE. Building Dedication, Open House & Fall Fair. Families are highly encouraged to come and participate. There will be games, crafts and activities geared towards children and youth.

# Prairie Choir to Start in September

Barb Park, Choir Director

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If you had ever thought about joining Prairie's choir, now is the time to put it on your schedule for the fall.

Prairie's choir rehearses most Sunday mornings from September until the end of May. Rehearsals begin at 8:45 in the main meeting room and finish about 9:30. We sing about once a month. Rehearsals will probably begin either September 4th or 11th, so watch the calendar. We currently wear masks while singing, as with all other Prairie indoor activities, to keep everyone healthy.

This would be a great time to join if you have thought about it but never taken the plunge. We would love to have you give it a try, even if you don't have previous choral experience. We are trying to arrange for child care during rehearsals, but this is not finalized yet so let me know if you are interested but need someone to watch your child or children. This will help in planning.

We would love for you to come join us! Reach out by email to [barpark@gmail.com](mailto:barpark@gmail.com) with questions or for more information.



An early Renaissance music book. Don't worry-our choir uses more modern music.

Photo credit: Pageen Small



In addition to singers, Prairie also has many talented instrumentalists.

Evelyn Kain (left) and Nancy Wunderlin play a recorder and flute duet at a recent Sunday service.

Photo credit: Barb Chatterton



# Committee on Ministry Seeks New Member

Heidi Hughes, Rachel Long, Paula Pachciarz, and Kent Wenger,  
Nominating Committee

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Our Bylaws state, “The purpose of the Committee on Ministry is to work with the Board, Minister, congregation and committees to ensure the effectiveness of the congregation’s ministry in fulfillment of its mission.” This role for the COM is still new for our congregation, and the committee is still working on establishing processes, policies and procedures for how it will accomplish this very important work. Its current members are Mary Frantz, Barbara Park, and Katrina Thompson.

Mary is stepping down, and we are looking for a new member. We will be electing the new COM member at a special Parish Meeting on September 11, 2022 right after the service. This fall, we plan to change the Bylaws to establish 3-year staggered terms for Committee on Ministry members, who will all be elected by the congregation. We are seeking someone who can take over for Mary as soon as elected, and who would also begin a 3-year term in November.



The right person for this position would be someone who likes thinking about the “big picture” of Prairie’s purpose and potential to do good in the world, and what changes would further its success. Since the committee is so new, this person will need to participate in developing committee processes and help write its policies. They must be willing to participate in online meetings once or twice per month and be able to work with documents online at times between meetings. They must be able to keep personal information confidential, and also be able to effectively communicate results from the committee’s deliberations and give feedback to the Minister, Board, and congregation.

Being a member of the Committee on Ministry has the potential to be one of the most rewarding volunteer positions in our society. Are you the right person for the job? Let us know by August 31st , after which we will bring our recommendation to the congregation for approval. Thanks so much for your consideration!



Photo credit: [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

# Prairie Celebrates Pride

Pageen Small

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Madison's annual Magic Pride Festival, hosted by OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center, returned as an in-person event this year after two years of being held virtually. Prairie had a booth where we offered information and activities. Our activities included pride flag face (or arm) painting and "take a blessing, leave a blessing," where people could share inspiring and affirming words. Our pride face painting was a huge hit with attendees. We had printed different types of pride flags so attendees could choose which one they wanted. Several members and friends volunteered at our booth, and we enjoyed chatting with people who stopped by including several Prairie friends and fellow UUs from other congregations.



Above left: Booth hosts arrived early to set up. Folks were helping each other pitch their tents and making friends with their booth neighbors. .

Above right: Heidi Hughes gets a Rainbow Pride flag on her cheek.

Below left: Ron Frye enjoys a break in the shade after getting a Pride flag on his cheek and before biking home.

Below right: Pageen Small paints a flag on a young attendee.

Photo credit: Jeremy Small





# Gratitude

Mary Mullen

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Sticky notes and an invitation by Rev. Matt on Sunday, August 16, resulted in an outpouring of things Prairie folks are grateful for; in fact, 385 colorful notes were pasted on the symbolic “grass” on the front wall of the meeting room. The room was quiet at first as the congregation meditated on their gratitude and wrote on the sticky notes. Then, as people brought them up, the mood became decidedly happy. By the end of the activity, laughter could be heard here and there.

It was interesting to read all 385 notes. I actually typed them into an Excel worksheet. There were definite themes. A very strong theme was thankfulness for family in general, and specific people such as parents, children, grandparents, siblings, husbands, wives, and partners, including some by name. Friends also drew a lot of gratitude as did the Prairie community, both in general and in specific, such as the “Prairie women’s group.”

Health and good medical care also got the nod. Someone even named dentists! Music was mentioned quite often sometimes just in general, sometimes in some detail such as “piano,” “shared music,” “singing,” or “having learned to read music.” Other culture-related items were “art,” “education,” and “books.” Nature was another frequent object of gratitude, often expressed in that one word and other times enumerated as “the out-of-doors,” “rain” and “rainbows,” “sunshine,” “clouds,” “bees,” “trees,” and especially “flowers.”

This only touches the surface of the many gratitudes expressed on the sticky notes. Wouldn’t you know that politics crept in as shown in examples of “Joe Biden” and “firing of Michael Gableman.”

If you are ever hard up for something positive, drop me a line, and I’ll send you the list. Something on it will for sure trigger positive feelings and a pleasant warm feeling of gratitude.



The Prairie Women’s Group WOW and pets were two gratitudes expressed by several people during the August 14 Sunday service.

Left: August 6 WOW attendees Robin Proud (upper left screen); Kate Liu, Barbara Park, and Mary Mullen (upper right screen); Paula Pachciarz (bottom left screen); and Anne Urbanski (bottom right screen).

Right: Paula Pachciarz shows her elderly pet cat.

Photo credit: Mary Mullen