

Prairie Fire

November
2022



A group of Prairie folks who volunteered at Beacon last month. For more information about this project and the Social Action Committee, see the article on page 8.

Photo credit: Katrina Thompson

Prairie Contacts

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

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Calendar

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

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Friday 4, 11, 18, 25 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Dungeons and Dragons (online)

Saturday 5

- 10a WOW (Women of Wonder)

Sunday 6

- 10a Service: Widening the Circle

Sunday 13

- 10a Service: Guest at Your Table by Prairie (Intergenerational Service)

Sunday 20

- 10a Fall Parish Meeting by Prairie

Thursday 24

- Happy Thanksgiving!

Saturday 26

- 10a Creativity and Connection (online)

Sunday 27

- 10a Service by Reverend Matt

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



Photo credit: unsplash.com

Editor's note

Please contact the editor at 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.

Words from the President

Kathy Converse, President

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Our experience with the weather changing daily from dark and windy to sun to rain to snow then back to sun is a reflection of all that is happening at this time of year. The upcoming election activities, school activities, and the frenzy of outdoor social and commercial activities are being squeezed in before it is too cold.

While we race around like the squirrels in my yard, let's take time to include the many activities being offered at PUU. I especially note the start of circle dinners that our family has enjoyed for thirty years. It is a unique way to really get to know members and friends at Prairie. If your living space is too small you can use Prairie's spaces. If you are unable to host by yourself please let the Membership Committee know so we can help you host with a partner. Please join us in this long time tradition.



Circle Dinners Launching (and possibly Lunching) this Fall

Lynn Currie, Membership Committee

Circle Dinners are back! If you are interested in joining a traditional Circle Dinner group this year, now is the time to let the Membership Committee know. Circle Dinners are groups of 6 to 12 (6-8 adults plus kids) people who meet approximately once a month for dinner and conversation at the home of one of the circle members. Circles are organized each fall, but new members can be added at any time. Some dinner groups include children, while others may be organized for adults only. If it is difficult for you to commit to a monthly gathering, you can share your wish to be an alternate.

Please respond no later than Tuesday, October 25th if you are interested. On the 26th, we will create Circle Dinner groups by looking at past groupings, with the goal of creating groups that allow everyone to (hopefully) get to know someone new.

To indicate your interest, reply to membership@uuprairie.org with:

- Your Name
- Names and Ages of those who will be joining you monthly
- Phone:
- Email:
- Other important considerations for the committee:

During the COVID pandemic, Circle Dinners shifted to Circle Groups that included a range of activities such as games, outdoor activities, a movie group, etc. If you are interested in joining one of the existing groups, please contact the Membership Committee at membership@uuprairie.org.

Courage and Change

Rev. Matt Aspin

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If you found yourself facing unprecedented levels of change, would you hope to experience paralyzing fear or an unexpectedly deep well of courage?

The current Prairie Vision statement proclaims, “We support each other’s personal development and spiritual growth.” To that end, I introduced the Program and RE committees to a low-cost, theme-based subscription service used by many UU congregations around the country called “Soul Matters.” It offers a monthly theme for collective reflection, with sermon prompts, readings, music suggestions (with copyright authorization), and small group discussion ideas. The purpose of a resource like this is to help a community to more deeply explore and practice a concept together from many different angles: collectively during Sunday services, over family meals after an RE class, experientially through intentional spiritual practices, and in deep discussions during gatherings like Circle Dinners or Covenant groups. Your program leaders have decided to give this a try for the next year to see if it can lighten the load for our volunteers while simultaneously expanding the depth of content being made available for our collective explorations.

The Soul Matters themes for October and November are Courage and Change. Could there be two more timely topics for us to wrestle with in this moment in history? Stay tuned for more information about Soul Matters and all the ways we might begin to integrate collective monthly themes into our shared journey going forward.

Our world is changing faster than ever. And change, especially when it feels outside of our control, can feel scary.

Joining with others in a community like Prairie that is committed to helping us to strengthen both ourselves and the relational bonds with our fellow travelers is one way we can begin to expand the capacities each of us already has inside.

Take courage, my friends. If you are a part of this Prairie, you never have to face the challenges of this rapidly changing world alone.

Remember...we’re all in this together.



Photo credit:
unsplash.com

Religious Exploration

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

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It's hard to believe that the end of the year is quickly approaching! With the holiday season arriving soon we have a lot of fun activities planned for the kids!



On Sunday November 13th there will be a multigenerational service at Prairie dedicated to promoting The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's longest established fundraising and educational program for our congregations, Guest at Your Table. Guest at Your Table "is UUSC's annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about key human rights issues". This program allows UUs of all ages to engage collectively in human rights issues that are happening around the world. On the 13th the children will perform a skit about Guest at Your Table which we will create and rehearse on October 23rd and November 6th. If you would like to learn more about Guest at Your Table visit the website [HERE](#).

On Sunday November 20th there will be a shortened service followed by the Annual Parish Meeting. To allow as many RE volunteers as possible to attend that meeting we will be having a Movie Day in Religious Exploration! We will screen *Kiki's Delivery Service* "a heartwarming, gorgeously-rendered tale of a young witch discovering her place in the world." If you would like to view the trailer do so [HERE](#).

Religious Exploration Calendar

November

- 11/6 - Continuation of Guest at Your Table skit planning and rehearsal
- 11/13 - Guest at Your Table Multigenerational Service (children will perform a skit and be present throughout the service).
- 11/20 - Parish Meeting/Movie Day (we will watch Kiki's Delivery Service).
- 11/27 - Native American Heritage (we will celebrate Native American Heritage Month by learning about the rich and diverse cultures, traditions and histories of Native people.)

December

- 12/4 - Nifty Gifty (Children make craft gifts for friends and family using simple materials, assisted by some of our more artistic members).
- 12/11- Multigenerational Service (Old Befana).
- 12/18 - Symbol Tree Multigenerational Service
- 12/25 - Multigenerational Potluck & Party

Remembering Donna Murdoch

Mary Mullen

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Prairie has learned that longtime Prairie member Donna Murdoch died on Friday, October 14, 2022, at Meriter Hospital in Madison.

Donna signed Prairie's membership book on January 15, 1989, and for years was a very active member who attended Sunday services regularly. More recently, she had lived in assisted living where Caring Committee member Aileen Nettleton saw to her needs.

I remember Donna from her participation in Prairie events and activities and from being with her in one of Madison's Race Relations Circles. I found her to be gracious, thoughtful, and friendly, and I mourn her passing.

A memorial service will be planned in collaboration with Aileen Nettleton and Donna's family. Information will be shared when available.



Above: Donna at a Women's Group meeting on 10/25/2003.

Left: Donna (right) with Anna Nettleton at the first remodeling dedication on 2/19/1989.

Below: Donna (front left) at a book club meeting on 8/10/2014. Others are (clockwise from left) Nancy Garst, Pam & Gary Gates, Phoenix Wardell, Al Nettleton, Erin Bosch, Millie Moffett, and Deesa Pence.



Remembering Bob West

Mary Mullen

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Bob West, Prairie member in the 1980s, passed away on October 12, 2022. In the 1980s Bob West belonged to Prairie and did a lay ministry in 1982 called "Contemporary Problems in American Society." A write-up in the Prairie Fire, reprinted on page 796 of the Prairie history book set, notes that he was "an environmentalist who was the main force behind Wisconsin's legislation on phosphate pollution." He knew what he was talking about since he was a chemistry professor at the UW. The same article notes that Bob was most proud of the fact that he helped found the Women's Medical Fund which had provided loans to over 900 women seeking abortions over the previous 10 years. Some of these loans would have been after Roe v Wade was decided – the ruling was made on January 22, 1973 – but women still needed resources to obtain an abortion.

Bob was also an avid mountain climber who "led several mountaineering expeditions to British Columbia and Alaska, where he has climbed and named more than forty new mountain peaks."

Besides the information in our history book, check out the Wikipedia article at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_West_\(chemist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_West_(chemist)) Note that he is Robert C. West, March 3, 1928 – October 12, 2022.

Thanks to Al Nettleton for finding the death notice and letting Prairie know.



This drawing shows an uncanny likeness to Bob. The artist is unknown.



Photo credit: unsplash.com

Prairie Folks Make Lunches at The Beacon

Pam Gates, Social Action Committee Co-chair

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“It’s fun to do something with Prairie folks not at Prairie once in a while,” Katrina Daly Thompson commented. Last month, Prairie volunteers worked together at the Beacon to make 250 ham or turkey sandwiches and fill 250 sandwich bags with extras. The project went very smoothly with nine of us: Chris Porter, Dirk and Susan Herr-Hoyman, Margit Moses, Casey Steinau, Pam Gates, Deesa Pence, Richard Berling, and Katrina; we finished in two hours!

“I was one of the four [the first time we did this, on Aug. 26], and I found it to be rewarding and sociable,” Mary Frantz reported.

Alas, The Beacon had to hire out the work to get all Fridays covered (we’d committed to the fourth Friday of every month), and the contractor insisted on doing every Friday. So the Social Action Committee is looking for another place where we can share our time and skills together. Thanks to all who participated in this short-lived but worthwhile effort!



Left: The group of volunteers prepares food for the lunches.

Below: Chris Porter works on the many individual sacks.

Photo credit: Katrina Thompson



Bylaw Proposal Finalized

Rachel Long, Bylaws Team

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The Bylaws Team has finalized our proposal for changes, which will be voted on at our Fall Parish Meeting on Sunday, November 20th. For voting purposes, we will be breaking the proposal into three parts:

- Proposal 1) changes to sections 6 and 7
- Proposal 2) changes to section 9 and 10
- Proposal 3) changes to the rest of the document

Proposal Summaries

Proposal 1)

- Switch the order of sections 6, currently Officers, and 7, currently Board of Trustees, for clarity
- Remove the requirement that the President "shall preside" at Board and Congregational Meetings, but instead meetings "are led by the President, Vice President, or their designee."
- Clarify the President's role to include "The President leads the Board, and together with the Board leads the congregation in accomplishing its business."
- Remove information about how vacancies are filled (move to the election section)

Proposal 2)

- Switch the order of sections 9, currently Nominations and Elections, and 10, currently Standing and Other Committees, for clarity
- Establish terms and term limits for the Committee on Ministry members, all of whom will now be elected by the Congregation. Rotating terms will be three-years, with one new member elected each year at the Fall Meeting, limit of two successive terms
- Expand the role of Nominating Committee. Currently Bylaws state that the Nom Com nominates Board and Nominating Committee members. This proposal states that the Nom Com will nominate candidates for all elected positions (including the Committee on Ministry members,) and adds that Nom Com will make recommendations for leaders that the Board appoints (such as chairs of committees). The Board retains responsibility for appointing these leaders.
- Clarify that members of the Committee on Ministry and Nominating Committee must be Prairie members
- Include information about how vacancies are filled in the elections section

Proposal 3)

- Change the minister search process so that the Minister Search Committee presents their recommended candidate directly to the Congregation rather than to the Board
- Number all sections of the Bylaws for consistency
- Fix capitalization and punctuation errors throughout the document
- Simplify and improve language clarity (some of the above problems are also fixed in Proposals 1 and 2)

(continued on next page)

Bylaw Proposal Finalized cont'd

Rachel Long, Bylaws Team

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Bylaws Drafts

Here is the link to what our Bylaws will be if the changes are adopted:

[Clean Copy of Bylaws proposal 101722.docx](#)

Here is the link to our current Bylaws for comparison:

[Bylaws revised 2021-08-29.pdf](#)

Here is the link to the markup copy illustrating all the changes if you would like to see that version:

[Bylaws proposed amendments 101722.docx](#)

Many thanks to those of you who participated in updating and improving our bylaws. Please contact any member of the Bylaws Team if you have any questions. The Bylaws Team includes Rachel Long, Alex Moore, Al Nettleton, and Chris Porter

Financial News

Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair
and **Suzanne Gernandt**, Treasurer

Thank you to everyone who participated in our fall auction and raffle. It was a fun event and we raised over \$4000!

We are in the midst of our annual pledge drive. Our pledge goal is \$167,808. So far, we have pledges of \$35,420. This is an important pledge year. We need financial support for our Sunday programs, children's religious exploration, minister, building maintenance, administration, and many committees. Will you consider increasing your pledge? If you are new to Prairie, will you consider a financial pledge this year?

We wish you all the best in the coming year.



Photo credit: [unsplash.com](#)