

# Prairie Fire

January  
2023



Prairie's sign and front yard covered in a blanket of snow and backlit by the winter sun.  
Photo credit: Pageen Small

## Prairie Contacts

The Reverend Matt Aspin, Minister -

[minister@uuprairie.org](mailto:minister@uuprairie.org)

Kathy Converse, President -

[president@uuprairie.org](mailto:president@uuprairie.org)

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration -

[dre@uuprairie.org](mailto:dre@uuprairie.org)

Nancy Wunderlin, Administrator -

[admin@uuprairie.org](mailto:admin@uuprairie.org)

Pageen Manolis Small, 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.

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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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## Sunday 1

- 10a Service: "Wishes for the New Year" by Prairie

## Friday 6, 13, 20, 27 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Dungeons and Dragons (online)
- 7:30p Meditation Group (hybrid)

## Saturday 7

- 10a Women of Wonder (WOW)

## Sunday 8

- 10a Service by Rev. Matt
- 11:30a Soup Sunday

## Sunday 15

- 10a Service: "A Small Town Rises" by Eddie and Mary Sue Short
- 11:30a Interweave Meeting

## Thursday 19

- 7p Guys Group

## Sunday 22

- 10a Service by Rev. Matt

## Saturday 28

- 10a Creativity and Connection (online)

## Sunday 29

- 10a Service - tbd

# 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 Nancy Wunderlin's Office Hours:

Sun-Tue: working on site in the Annex  
Wed-Fri: working remotely

## DRE Alice Mandt's Office Hours:

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



## 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.

# Words from the President

Kathy Converse, President

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Ah, thoughts on celebrating holidays and gift giving that surround us in December. Years ago I decided I would continue to celebrate a year end holiday of reflection and giving.

When I open boxes of holiday decorations, memories carry me back through the years of my family growing up, many family and friends no longer with us, and good friends in all the places we have lived. I always want a fir tree or at least some boughs in the house so it smells like Vermont and my first home.



I love giving and receiving gifts: new, handmade, edible, recycled, repurposed or passed on by someone who no longer needs them. I find a spark from each person in the gift they give me. I think of them and see their faces. They hold me in their thoughts by sharing a gift. The cards and letters that we receive also keep us connected.

Be gentle with all and respect their traditions. Give generously for those who don't have the joy or ability to celebrate.

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

## Guys' Group

Dan Proud

Prairie's Guys' Group meets every month on the 3rd Thursday from 7 to 9 pm. We share news and discuss a range of topics. We welcome all interested members and friends. For more information, please contact Dan Proud at [derrproud@att.net](mailto:derrproud@att.net) or Andy Garst at [garst.andrew@gmail.com](mailto:garst.andrew@gmail.com).



# Minister's Musings

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister



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"There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."  
-Albert Einstein

Even though this quote offers an over-simplified binary, the sentiment is fitting during this season of wonder. We're here. We've made it through another year together. The sun is still rising. Before we know it, the cardinals will be bouncing around backyards insisting that spring is right around the corner, even though there will still be several more months of cold and snow to contend with before the miracle returns and new life begins to emerge across the prairie once again.

Well, actually...not everyone has made it. We've recently lost several beautiful souls from the Prairie family, and several more of our beloved members are currently battling terminal illnesses. Losing loved ones is never easy. But It has surely been beautiful to see how this community circles round it's members whenever they're facing a challenging stretch. In this age of disconnection, the cultural of mutual support that forms the lifeblood of this community is pretty miraculous in it's own right.

I wonder what challenges this next year will bring? One thing I expect to see are some lively discussions. There's a lot going on in the world, there's a lot going on in our chosen faith tradition, and there is a lot of (really good stuff) happening here a Prairie. The work to review Prairie's Mission and Vision continues. Our Association is engaged in its scheduled review of Article II of our UUA bylaws (the part that currently contains our Seven Principles). We are widening the circle, and we are welcoming new members. There is much to discuss, and much to decide!

And while I may have opinions one way or another about one thing or another, this is ultimately YOUR church. My hope for this new year is that this community will continue to come together, not only to support one another in times of struggle, not only help our families raise healthy children, but to keep practicing the skills that are so needed in the world today: patience, compassion, understanding, and compromise.

I wonder what we'll do accomplish together in the coming year? Based on what I've seen so far, I just expect to keep seeing miracles...



# Religious Exploration

Alice Mandt, Director of Religious Exploration

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As the new year unfolds, the Religious Exploration Committee and I are excited to continue to develop inspiring programs for our young community members at Prairie. After overcoming the complications that covid posed for our community over the past year, I'm happier than ever to be back in community with the children. With the help of the RE Committee and volunteers, we are building and sustaining a vibrant community of young people here at Prairie!

## Changes for the New Year

I'm very excited to announce that starting January 8th, Prairie's Religious Exploration program will be offering a Sunday morning experience for our older children (ages 10 and up). Although we have had success with the workshop model, in which all children have been learning and playing together, we have identified a need for our middle school aged kids to have programming that more closely aligns with their developmental stage and allows them to build community as the older members of RE. In response to this need, we have secured multiple volunteers to run a curriculum called "Compass Points: For the Questions Central to an Adolescent's Spiritual Journey."

The goals of Compass Points are:

- To help participants sort out their feelings about themselves and their world as they do the difficult work of starting to create their adult selves;
- To help them discover what they believe about life's big questions -- the nature of humanity and the divine, beliefs about life, death and faith;
- To help youth think independently, assume responsibility, make decisions, explore values and adopt the practice of radical hospitality;
- To guide participants in acquiring enough background in Unitarian Universalist history, polity and theology that they can know and express what it means to be a Unitarian Universalists;
- To help them understand that religious liberty is a hard-won legacy that continues to need protection.



## **Compass Points**

If you'd like to learn more about the Compass Points curriculum, you can find a sample session [HERE](#). The Compass Points class will take place every Sunday morning after the Story for All Ages in the youth room in the Annex.

As for our children younger than 10, we will continue meeting together in the main building's basement and participating in activities, games, and crafts that revolve around a monthly theme. The theme for January is Finding Our Center. This month I hope to help the children develop an awareness of their core-self which can help them regulate their emotions and develop inner strength.

To explore the theme of Finding Our Center the younger children will engage with some of the following activities:

- Brainstorming & Drawing Our Values: I will ask children what their ideal church looks, feels and sounds like.
- Create Your Own Constellation: What does it mean to center yourself and how does that affect others?
- Yoga & Meditation

# Fall Parish Meeting Committee Reports

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Editor's note: Fall parish reports were spread between the December 2022 and January 2023 editions of the Prairie Fire.

## Social Action Committee

### Pam Gates & Chris Porter, co-chairs

Since our last report in May, we have changed co-chairs: Chris Porter has replaced Molly Plunkett, who continues to be very active on the committee.

Molly continues her participation in WUUSAN, Wisconsin UU Social Action Network. The group's focus has been voting. Molly held a gathering at her house to listen via Zoom to former gubernatorial candidate Mike McCabe's observations on connecting with voters of various persuasions. She also hosted a Madison UU get-out-the-vote session at Prairie Oct. 15, invited and introduced WUUSAN president Rev. Mark Richards as our service speaker Oct. 23, and held a voter-encouragement postcard-writing session after the service that day. About 12 Prairie members, including Rory and Liam Creed, addressed and mailed 400 postcards!

Ten Prairie members participated in two sessions at The Beacon preparing sack lunches for people experiencing homelessness. The project was supposed to be once-a-month and long-term, but Beacon staff changes brought it to an end. The committee is looking into a similar commitment, possibly in the Allied Drive neighborhood. We expect that some Prairie members will participate in a Leopold School area cleanup Nov. 12. The project developed from a conversation between Chris and a visitor to our building dedication Sept. 25. At that event as well, Molly did more voter-encouragement work, and Pam requested input on Prairie's current occupation of historic Ho-Chunk land. Rev. Matt will contact Ho-Chunk leaders for further interaction on this issue. Also being considered: a joint visit by Prairie members to the Chazen Museum, which currently has an exhibit of the history of discrimination at the UW. This project was suggested by a Prairie attendee who was impressed by the exhibit. Social Action recruited two service speakers in September: representatives from Willma's Fund and from Worker Justice Wisconsin. Prairie continues to share its Sunday offering with organizations that ease homelessness: Willma's Fund and the Porchlight DIGS Project are our recipients for this year's third and fourth quarters. Molly has met with JustDane Director Linda Ketcham about getting the homeless newspaper Street Pulse going again. This will be a long-term project.



Pam worked with MOSES, the local interfaith group affiliated with WISDOM that works for criminal legal reform locally and statewide, on door-to-door voting literature distribution. Pam also edits and writes for the MOSES bimonthly newsletter and yearbook and represents Prairie at monthly MOSES meetings. Prairie has been a member of MOSES, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, for most of those years.

(reports continue on next page)

# Fall Parish Meeting Committee Reports Cont'd

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## Program Committee

Voting Members: Renee Deschard (Chair), Barb Park, Robin Proud, Rick Ruecking, Benjamin Van Thiel, Nancy Wunderlin

Non Voting Members: Rev. Matt Aspin, Dan Klock

The Program Committee has created six different welcoming words for both some variety and consistency at the beginning of our Sunday services. We reviewed and updated our policies and procedures along with other committees as directed by the Board. On 9/25 many people were involved in our building dedication service which was followed by the very fun festival. Every week we have those who join us virtually on Zoom and we will continue to strive to provide the congregation with high quality and accessible Sunday services. As always if you have program suggestions/feedback please email [program@uuprairie.org](mailto:program@uuprairie.org)

Prairie's covid19 team (Rev. Matt, Karen Deaton 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 Ron Frye and Suzanne Gernandt for their time on the committee and welcome Benjamin Van Thiel as our newest Program Committee member. Huge thank you to 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, Barb Park

The Music Committee is a sub-committee of the Program Committee. We meet monthly working on providing a variety of music to enhance Sunday services. In the second half of 2022, we've had over 20 Prairie members and youth perform music and lead the congregation in singing. We were even lucky enough to have visits from Vets on Frets and the Raging Grannies! Thank you to all the different ways everyone participated, including listening. A special thank you goes to Ron Frye for organizing all the music for the Fall Fair.

After a summer break, the Prairie choir is back and going strong under Barb Park's leadership. We are still hoping to provide child care during choir rehearsals in the future, possibly starting early next year. Our big news is we've purchased a newer baby grand piano for the Meeting House. This piano will be a wonderful instrument for Prairie for a long time. Thank you for your generous donations to make this possible.

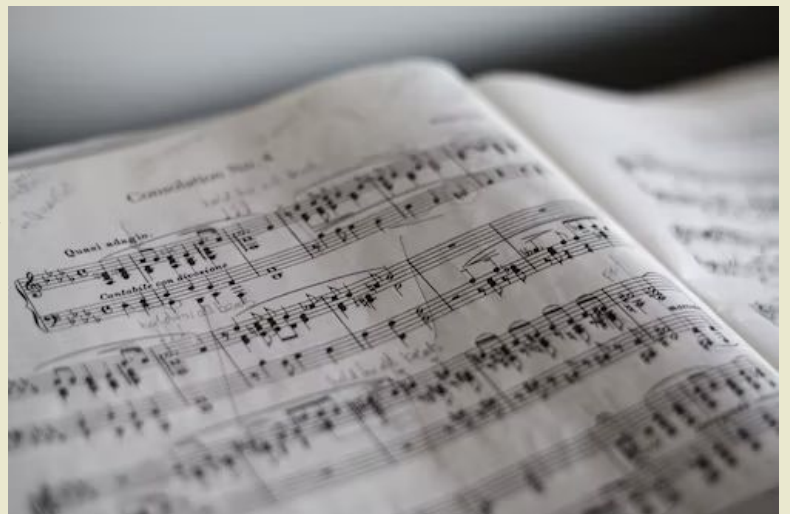


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# Fall Parish Meeting Committee Reports Cont'd

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## The Caring Committee

We want to thank Nancy Wunderlin for her great help and caring on this committee. She served us well. She was a valuable member of our group, but she has other Prairie responsibilities which need her too. Thus, we have a new member now: a big welcome to Heidi Hughes! We look forward to her help and medical expertise and collaboration. I hope we don't overtax her with too many specific medical questions from all of us on the team since she is a Physician's Assistant. We are also lucky to continue to have special help from our minister who so readily jumps in to take over when Caring Committee members are out of town or temporarily unable to fulfill their duties. We are very grateful for this, Rev. Matt.

It is heartwarming to have Caring Bridges and meal trains set up for ongoing communication and help for those who are in need. Please inform the committee if you need help or know of a member who needs some assistance from our group. We are fortunate to have Aileen Nettleton, Erin Bosch, Jane Richards, Margit Moses, Heidi Hughes and Rev. Matt Aspin.

## Hospitality Committee

Members: Barbara Chatterton, Margit Moses, Evan Fisher, Nancy Wunderlin (chair)

Coffee service is working well in the new kitchen. After some changes in our COVID guidelines, we started serving coffee in the main meeting room. Now, with updated guidelines, we're serving coffee in the lobby area as originally designed in the remodel. We have a wonderful small group of volunteers serving coffee and cleaning up on Sundays. Please let anyone on the Hospitality Committee know if you're interested in making coffee occasionally. We also welcome yummy treats! The instructions for the coffee maker and dishwasher are posted on the walls, near each appliance, in the kitchen.

We had our first Soup Sunday with our new kitchen at the end of October. Thank you to everyone who participated. It was a smaller turn out, but it was a joy to finally share a meal together. The dishwasher was put through its paces and lived up to our expectations. The next Soup Sunday will be after the service on January 8.



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