

Prairie Fire

July
2023



Wildflowers. Photo credit: Ingo Doerrie on unsplash.com

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Calendar

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

Saturday 1

- 10a Women of Wonder (WOW)

Sunday 2

- 10a "Moving On" by Rev. Matt
- 11:30a Appreciation Reception for Rev. Matt

Friday 7, 21, 28 (every Friday)

- 4:30p Dungeons and Dragons (online)

Sunday 9

- 10a Service
- 11:30a PUUPs Meeting
- 11:30a Visitor Orientation

Saturday 15

- 1:15p Game Group

Sunday 16

- 10a "The Last Freie Gemeinde: The Free Congregation of Sauk County" by Nick Schweitzer
- 12p Interweave

Tuesday 18

- 6p Board Meeting

Thursday 20

- 7p Guys Group

Saturday 22

- 10a Creativity and Connection (online)

Sunday 23

- 10:10a Joint Service with Free Congregation of Sauk County
- 11:30a Covenant Group

Sunday 30

- 10a Service

Office Hours

Administrator Nancy Wunderlin:

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

DRE Alice Mandt:

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 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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“World wide music day is designated to pay tribute to music, something which plays a significant role in everybody’s life. Music is the essence of life, and Music Day is about realizing the power of music and sharing it with others.”

-Neha Dhyani

I love this holiday as June 21 was my sister’s birthday. Sue loved music and was a booming alto. She sang for decades in her church and community choirs in Vermont. It is the perfect way to celebrate her life!

Sue and I were close in spirit but far apart in reality as she lived in Vermont. We talked on the phone every week and sent cards and letters. Sue died 25 years ago. I often think, if she had grown older with me, how we would now be sharing photos on Facebook and Messenger and having FaceTime and Zoom calls. I am currently Friends with her church. I could hear her sing.

Many people dismiss Facebook and other social media platforms as annoying and unnecessary. But for those of us with all our family and many friends far away, it is wonderful. I love all the messages and pictures they send, and it keeps me up to date on their important happenings. So when we do get together in person it is as if we have always been there. I hope it continues to be available.

In our Prairie community, News and Views, Facebook, and Zoom also play a role in communication. Zoom allowed us to have Sunday services, meetings and social functions during covid quarantining. Many members unable to travel to functions can stay in touch and remain part of our “family”. We are better informed for decision making about our community that impacts all of us. Let us continue to include all.

Prairie Members Plant Seeds of Community

Rev. Matt Aspin, Minister

When Erica Anderson, the Program Manager at Joining Forces for Families wished aloud that there could just be some nice flowers or something in front of their office to make the space more inviting for the community, Prairie members responded! Chris Unger, Ari Unger, Barbara Chatterton, and Rev. Matt stopped by the office with some plants (including tomatoes!), some dirt, some mulch, and some tools, and quickly turned an overgrown area into a welcoming garden!



Photo credit: Matt Aspin

Religious Exploration (RE) Sunday Fun

Andrea Keyser

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On Sunday, June 18th, most of the kids shared their favorite books in person or on zoom for the Prairie Reads summer service. After they shared, the kids, Alice, Tim, Andrea, and Patty stopped out front of Patty's house to see her monarch Pupa. Then we all went to Marlborough playground where some of the kids wanted to read us their books before the playground. We had beautiful weather and a lot of conversation.

Photo credit: Andrea Keyser



MOSES to Meet at Prairie July 9!

Pam Gates

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I am happy to announce that MOSES will hold its next general meeting at Prairie on Sunday, July 9, 2:30-4:30 p.m. All MOSES general meetings are open to the public. We hope that Prairie members will take advantage of this gathering on familiar ground to further familiarize themselves with this interfaith organization, which Prairie has belonged to for many years.



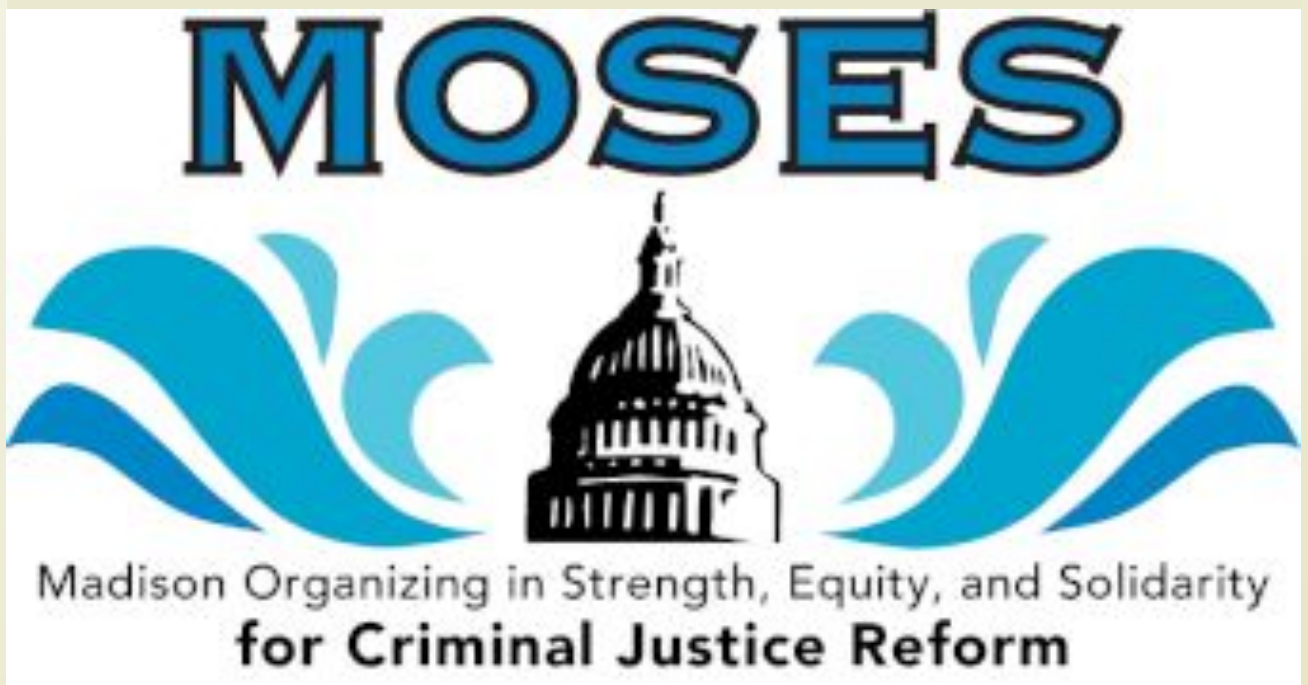
MOSES (Madison Organizing in Strength, Equity, and Solidarity) for Criminal-Legal System Reform, has been working to correct the racial and other inequities in our criminal-legal system since its beginnings in 2011. We've had a definite effect on planning for a new Dane County Jail and on the creation of a Dane County triage center and have worked on a statewide level as well, where we've had notable success in efforts to increase funding for treatment alternatives to and diversions from incarceration on a statewide level. But there's so much left to do!

Topics at this general meeting will include a report on Peer Counseling in the Dane County Jail and a public health report by Charlie Daniels on reducing the use of fentanyl in the community. There will also be a chance for everyone to participate in our racial equity circles, which take place at every MOSES general meeting.

Come at 2 p.m. for a chance to mingle with others before the meeting. All are welcome!

More information about MOSES can be found on their website

<https://mosesmadison.org/>



Spring Parish Meeting Committee Reports

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Note: Committee reports from the spring parish meeting are be spread through the June and July editions of the *Prairie Fire*.

Program Committee

Voting Members: Renee Deschard (Chair), Andy Garst, Barb Park, Robin Proud, Rick Ruecking, Sonya Sidky, Pageen Small

Non Voting Members: Rev. Matt Aspin, Nancy Wunderlin

There were many wonderful Sunday Services including a special performance of Old Befana on December 11th by Ken Lonquist and his troupe. As a reminder, if you would like to present or see a presentation at Prairie, please email program@uuprairie.org. Note that we schedule services two months in advance.

During Sunday services, we started using five different sets of welcoming words for consistency without repetitiveness. Our committee has been utilizing Soul Matters and its monthly themes to bring more cohesiveness to services. We received the results of the Prairie Interest survey and will work on recruiting people for various Sunday service roles.

We welcomed Andy Garst, Sonya Sidky, and Pageen Small as our newest Program Committee members. Huge thank you to all of our Prairie presiders, presenters, coordinators, readers, program assistants, musicians, tech & Zoom helpers who make our services so wonderful!

Our committee read through the Committee on Ministry's report and our responses are after the Music Committee Report.

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 first part of 2023, we heard performances including cello, French horn, guitar, voice, saxophone, and piano. In February, our piano purchased in 2022, received some refurbishing to the key action and humidity control system. Under Barb Park's leadership and Carl Wacker's accompaniment, the choir performed in February, March, and April and plans to perform in May. The choir gained 4 new members so far in 2023, and we hope to add more when child care can be offered during rehearsals. All singers who want to participate are welcome, but we especially are short of tenors and basses. Please reach out to Barb or any choir member if you're interested.



Photo credit: Annie Spratt on unsplash.com

Response To Committee On Ministry Report

We recommend the Program Committee plan some services that might interest older youth (without losing the interest of adults).

A representative from RE has been attending our Program meetings and we are continuing conversations about how to best achieve this. Currently we do not have many older youth. If someone has a suggestion for this type of service please email program@uuprairie.org

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Spring Parish Committee Reports cont'd.

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We recommend the Program Committee try to attract more diverse members to its committee. - Program actively recruits members with diverse perspectives.

Program Committee members represent different religious backgrounds, age, gender, sexual orientation, number of years at Prairie, etc.

Some congregants would like more programs involving the environment, art, music, dance, or movement. Some would like to see a series of several connected topics, followed by a Sunday of breakout groups and discussion with perhaps some action items. Some would like more services focusing on wonder and joy, such as the natural world or music. Others would like more services focused on science, such as climate change and emerging technologies and discoveries. Some would like more services from people reporting from the front lines of activism: what they do and why they do it – from the heart rather than PowerPoints about their organization and its goals.

- Program recognizes that our membership enjoys listening to a wide variety of speakers and topics and we try our best to accommodate that. It can be challenging to know in advance if a speaker from a non-profit will talk off of a PowerPoint or speak more from the heart. We will communicate and encourage speakers to talk more from the heart instead of relying on slides.

We recommend that the committee work with the Board and/or Membership or Nominating committees to host a program and/or other event highlighting all committees and other volunteer opportunities.

- Nominating Committee created, sent, and collected responses for their Prairie Interest Survey. This information is being entered into Breeze to help committee chairs and potential committee members connect. Program was planning to talk at the (now canceled/rescheduled) May Leadership Meeting and gather feedback from other committees about a program or event highlighting committees and volunteer opportunities.

We recommend the committee preserve its meeting notes and other documents in a shared google drive so that current and future members can readily access information about its current processes and decisions.

- This has been done since 2020 and we continue to have a shared program google drive with program related documents.

Nominating Committee

Our Committee has had a very busy year!

We created and implemented a skills and interests survey which we offered to all our members. The information we have gathered has already been useful in identifying potential candidates for leadership positions and people to serve as volunteers for committees and other tasks. Going forward, using the survey results rather than our personal knowledge of member's skills and interests should help Prairie be more inclusive in our choice of leaders, and help us better engage both new and established members in service that they find satisfying and rewarding. The Membership Committee is sending the survey to new members, and our Administrator will help get the results to committee chairs and other leaders.

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Spring Parish Committee Reports cont'd.

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In addition to developing the survey, the Nominating Committee has responded to Committee on Ministry recommendations for improving equity and inclusion by opening up our recruiting process. We now announce all openings for positions to the congregation, using multiple approaches so as to reach as many people as possible. Regarding our processes, the Nominating Committee procedure document states:

The Committee considers multiple criteria when selecting candidates, such as: representation of various constituencies and diverse identities within the congregation; a potential candidate's availability to attend meetings, to work as a part of a team, to communicate clearly and effectively, and to represent the Society in the larger community; a potential candidate's support of the congregation's vision and mission and a potential candidate's special skills for a specific position.

We recruited our slate of candidates for Spring 2023 elected positions on the Board and Nominating Committee as follows:

BOARD MEMBERS

Secretary - Dan Proud (currently completing a second 2-year term)

Treasurer - Chris Unger (current Treasurer is Suzanne Gernandt, who is completing a 2- year term)

At Large Member - Ken Skog (current Trustee is Jon Andrae, who is completing a 1 year term)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Heidi Hughes (currently completing a first 2-year term)

Margit Moses (current member is Kent Wenger, who is completing a second 2-year term)

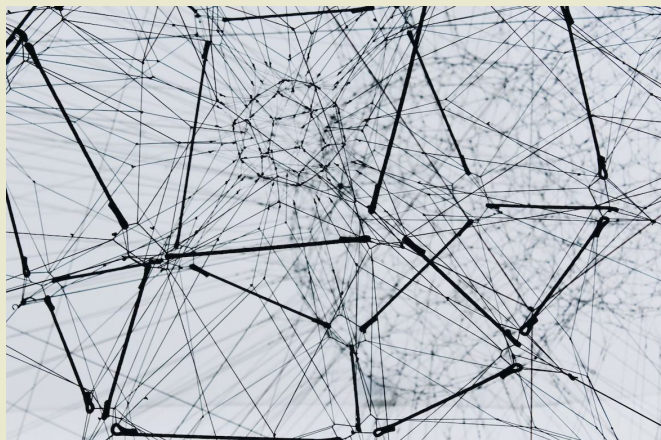
Earlier this year, the Board changed the appointment of committee chairs from indefinite terms to 2-year terms, to start July 1st 2023. This year only, the Board will be appointing chairs for a mix of 1-year and 2-year terms, so that not all these positions will open at the same time. The Nominating Committee has successfully recruited all needed candidates. The Board will announce the committee chairs when they are appointed.

This fall, one of our 3 Committee on Ministry members, Barb Park, will be completing her term. The Nominating Committee will be bringing our nominee for this position to the congregation at the Fall Parish Meeting in November.

Our great thanks to all of those who contribute their time and talent to support our Prairie community!

Nominating Committee members:
Rachel Long (Chair,) Heidi Hughes,
Paula Pachciarz, Kent Wenger

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Spring Parish Committee Reports cont'd.

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Social Action Committee

Allied Partners

Prairie is a long time member of Allied Partners, which is a group of churches that support the Allied neighborhood. Like many organizations, covid has had an effect on participation of churches that have been involved in the past. Fewer churches actively participate and community organizations that the neighborhood supports such as the Allied Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood Assoc, have just begun to reactivate. Allied Partners maintains funds to help with eviction prevention and utilities cut offs and sponsors scholarships for people seeking post high school education. Molly as the Prairie representative to Allied Partners also attends monthly Neighborhood Resource Team meetings which include city staff. Rev. Matt has been attending Allied Partners meetings and has led a strategy group to revitalize it.

Allied Wellness Center

Is a neighborhood health resource which has spearheaded the training of at least a dozen residents as Community Health Workers. During Covid Allied Community Health Workers and UW and community volunteers directed Allied Fresh which delivered boxes of fresh produce and meat to as many as 250 families on a weekly basis. On a monthly basis they also delivered Personal Essential packages containing shampoo, deodorant, and cleaning supplies. AWC has grown enormously in past two years to an operation with a full-time manager, Blanca Cruz, and two Community Health Workers who are on staff. Blanca and staff are looking at various types of programming to sponsor in the community AWC is currently renting space in the Annex from Prairie if you want to meet any of them. Prairie is involved with board representation (Molly) and bookkeeping services (Suzanne.)

WUUSAN

Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist State Action (WUUSAN) is a relatively new entity that seeks to provide information, coordination and collaboration in social justice work among UU congregations in Wisconsin. Many states have "Stans" or State Action Networks." Prairie was the host site for a statewide get out the vote drive last Fall leading to the Governor's race.



PrairieUU
Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society