

# Prairie Fire

November  
2023



Ducks over Question Mark Pond at Bethel Horizons, Main Cliff behind.  
Photo credit: Bob Park, September 30, 2023, at the annual Prairie Retreat.

## Table of Contents

Calendar	2
Staff Office Hours	2
Words from the President	3
Sunday Offering	3
2024 Pledge Drive	3
What's Going on in Religious Exploration?	4
Fall RE Programming for Older Students	5
Social Action Committee and MOSES Report	6



## Prairie Contacts

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

# Calendar

2

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

## Saturday 4

- 8:30a Prairie and Reeb volunteers at the River Food Pantry (sign up w/ Pam Gates, Social Action co-chair)
- 10a Women of Wonder (WOW)

## Sunday 5

- 10a “Deciding What’s True in a Polarized Society” by Michael Wagner
- 11:30a Transition Team Update and Pre-parish Meeting Information

## Saturday 11

- 9:30a New Member Orientation

## Sunday 12

- 10a “On Gratitude” by Ilene Haykus
- 11:30a PUUPs
- 11:30a Visitor Orientation

## Tuesday 14

- 6:30p Board Meeting

## Thursday 16

- 7p Guys Group

## Saturday 18

- 1p Games Group

## Sunday 19

- 10a Fall Parish Meeting
- 12p Interweave

## Saturday 25

- 10a Creativity and Connection (online)

## Sunday 26

- 10a Joint Service at James Reeb UU Congregation

## Office Hours

### Administrator Nancy Wunderlin:

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

### Pastoral Care, Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

Tues and Wed: on site in the Annex.  
Available for in-person meetings upon request.

### Director of Religious Exploration Karen

Deaton:

Mon, Wed, Fri, Sunday 9am to 12pm



## Editor's note

Please contact the editor at [prairiefire\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:prairiefire[at]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**

3

Thanksgiving has always been special for me as I was born on a Thanksgiving Day. I grew up in Vermont and celebrated Thanksgiving at my grandmother's. I can close my eyes and remember our family, grandparents, aunts, and uncle around the big dining room table. We were surrounded by special foods we only had once a year and a birthday cake. It was a time of togetherness, sharing our bounty.

It is sad that we are living in a period with so many families separated by long distances or torn apart, without enough food or even their homes. Perhaps no longer in their home country.

It is hard to figure out what we can do to change anything. I think our first step is to recognize it is wrong and stay openhearted, open-minded, and informed. Choose to support local and international organizations that work to keep families housed and fed.



## Sunday Offering

**Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair**

Thank you for supporting Prairie and local charities through your Sunday contributions. Sunday offerings are divided evenly between Prairie and a local charity. For third quarter 2023, Prairie donated \$1389.94 to Heart Room. Heart Room is a collaboration between families that have been homeless, Orchard Ridge UCC, and The Road Home. The money we contribute will be used for rental assistance for the families who are working to achieve stability with the help of many partners.

## 2024 Pledge Drive

**Chris Porter, Finance Committee Chair**



Thank you so much to everyone who has already pledged. Our pledge goal for 2024 is \$144,547. As of October 21st, we have 50 pledges totaling \$122,736. I am hoping for about ten more pledges. There is some chance we won't meet our full pledge goal, but I hope we will be able to fund all 2024 expenses.

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

# What's Going on in Religious Exploration?

4

**Karen Deaton, Director of Religious Exploration**



## How You Can Help our Program

- Bring Trick-or-Treat goodies to Prairie on October 29 and hand them out to children before the service. Admire their costumes.
- Help with the Halloween Party if you're willing to have fun with us instead of attending the All Souls' Day service.
- Donate good-condition books and toys as prizes at our Halloween party.
- Read the emails I send out requesting volunteers to help with child care during meetings and special events and consider helping!
- Contact me or members of the RE committee (Andrea S, Carl W, and Marie A) with ideas for RE service projects and other activities.
- Plan and/or lead a craft project for our December 10 crafting extravaganza - Nifty Gifty!

Contact me if you are interested in volunteering in any way!

## What's coming up in RE

October 28 (Saturday) - Everybody's invited to join us at the Eplegaarden in Fitchburg - meet at 9:30 near the parking lot.

October 29 - Halloween party! Kids can show off their Halloween costumes, play games, do crafts, and collect prizes. And of course, eat treats.

November 5 - Cooking Day! All ages of children and youth will be together, cooking apple crisp and pumpkin muffins to share.

November 12 - Age group classes followed by Prairie UU Parents Group (PUUPs) - families enjoy pizza together downstairs after the service, then parents meet upstairs for a check in and discussion on the topic of extended family and holidays.

November 19 - After a very brief service, children will enjoy snacks and a movie downstairs during the Parish Meeting.

November 26 - We do not plan to have programming at Prairie this Sunday. Instead we plan to join James Reeb UU on Madison's east side. We're inviting them to join us at Prairie on December 24.

Watch for information in the next Prairie Fire about special Sundays in December!



# Fall RE Programming for Older Students

5

**Tim Scott, RE Teacher**

This fall, we will be learning about UU principles, perspective taking, creativity, problem solving, frustration tolerance, social emotional skills, arithmetic, science, reading, and writing.

We are playing the tabletop roleplaying game [Traveller by Mongoose Publishing](#). This is integrated with [Therapeutically Applied Roleplaying Games: The Game to Grow Method](#) and [Building a Better World - What Role Will YOU Play?](#) We began with the task of creating a map featuring interesting points throughout known space using colored pencils and paper. Then we discussed why the map was not to scale. We explored the concept of rogue planets, which are planets that do not orbit any star. We also worked through career planning and in game results as outlined below.

**Tess's Character:** During their first term (18 – 21 years old) was accepted to a merchant academy with the goal of becoming a field researcher after graduation. While at the academy, they played a supposedly harmless prank that went wrong and someone got hurt. While prison was avoided, they did gain an enemy. They were able to successfully graduate from the academy. For their second term (22 – 25) they were hired as a field researcher and won a prize for their work, garnering both praise and envy of their peers.

**Miles' Character:** During their first term (18 – 21) went straight into the Interstellar Navy as a crewman (Engineer/Gunner), and was given advanced training but failed to learn from the opportunity. They earned a promotion to Ensign. During their second term (22 – 25) their vessel participated in a notable military engagement and improved their pilot skill. During their third term (26 – 29) they foiled a crime. They earned a promotion to sub-lieutenant. During their fourth term (30 – 33) they received advanced training. During their fifth term (34 – 37) they became involved in a romantic relationship and gained an ally.

**Trevor's Character:** During their first term (18 – 21) was accepted to a star marine academy. During their second term (22 – 25) they joined the star marines, but failed the officer exam. During their third term (26 – 29) their commanding officer took an interest in their career and aided them in becoming a lieutenant. During their fourth term (30 – 33) they were assigned to a black ops mission and were promoted to Captain. During their fifth term (34 – 37) they were promoted to Force Commander.

Plenty of spots still open. We are currently working through character generation, and people can be added at any time.



Tim Scott (plaid shirt) leads a group of older RE youth in their role playing adventure.  
Photo credit: Andrea Keyser Scott.

# Social Action Committee and MOSES Report

Pam Gates, Social Action Committee Co-chair

6

Three people from Prairie and several from First Unitarian (FUS) and James Reeb were among the 200 at a rally at the Capitol on Oct. 10 to protest the lengthy lockdowns in at least three of our state prisons. Those from Prairie were Katie Mulligan, Kathleen Lowry, who has recently attended our services and even the retreat, and myself. After the rally, we visited over 100 legislative offices to further our case; my delegation to Sen. Kelda Roys' office included a member of James Reeb. Roys' aide said Roys was working on a bill to ease the lockdown restrictions that are creating inhumane conditions in our prisons. I also visited with Rep. Jill Billings of La Crosse, another who needed no convincing. (Some delegates met with Republican legislators; I just happened to get Democrats.)



Image from the Oct 10 protest. Photo credit [Meryl Hubbard with Wisconsin Watch](#)

On Oct. 24, two Milwaukee representatives will introduce legislation concerning the prison conditions in question. I plan to attend the press conference, at 10 a.m. in the state Capitol; Molly sent an invitation to everyone on Prairie Views.

On Oct. 25, I will drive to Waupun with several other MOSES people to participate in a peaceful protest outside the prison. So far (Oct. 21), no other Prairie members have said they could go, though two said they would except for previous commitments.

First Unitarian Society (FUS) is showing a First Friday film on Friday, Nov. 3, complete with a meal at 5:30, child care during the film showing at 6:30, and a panel discussion at 7:30. The film is about restorative justice, a process of restoring the community to wholeness through mediation between victim and perpetrator. It's a very powerful tool that is being used in all four Madison high schools and in certain circumstances as an alternative to incarceration; people who have experienced it are indeed impressed with its power.

In other social action news, we continue to make sandwiches at The River food pantry every first Saturday. James Reeb has joined us, with at least two of our eight people each time. Last time, Oct. 1, they brought three.

Several years ago, before COVID, Prairie members participated in writing Christmas cards to people in the Dane County jail. We wrote our cards after several services in the fall. I have responded to that request again, now that the project is once again up and running, and I hope that at least a few Prairie members can help offer a little recognition and encouragement to people in jail during the holidays. I will probably bring cards the first Sunday in November and invite people to stay a few minutes after the service and write a card or two (or more, if they wish to!).

The committee at its last meeting considered starting a book discussion group to address criminal justice questions. Let me or Chris Porter know if this interests you. We also are the committee that selects the offertory sharer each quarter. Our emphasis continues to be homelessness.