

# Prairie Fire



April  
2024



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## Table of Contents

2	Calendar	5	Upcoming Program
2	Staff Office Hours	6	Programming Needs Your Talents
3	Words from the President	8	MidAmerica and General Assemblies
3	Annual Spring Auction Results	9	“So When Did You Know?”
4	What’s Going on in Religious Exploration?	11	A Letter from Moses

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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.

2

## Saturday 6

- 10a Women of Wonder (WOW)

## Sunday 7

- 10a "Earth Day-Walking The Talk," by Gary Gates
- 10a RE Cooking Day
- 11:30a Potluck Sunday
- 12p OWL parent meeting

## Sunday 14

- 10a Service
- 10a RE age group classes
- 10a OWL (11&12-year-old)
- 11:30a PUUPS (Prairie UU Parents)
- 11:30a Visitor Orientation
- 2p MOSES

## Tuesday 16

- 6:30p Board Meeting

## Thursday 18

- Prairie Guys Group

## Friday 19

- MidAmerica Regional Assembly

## Saturday 20

- MidAmerica Regional Assembly
- 1p Prairie Games Group

## Sunday 21

- 10a Intergenerational Service
- 11:30a Interweave
- OWL after lunch

## Sunday 28

- 10a Service
- 10a RE age group classes
- 10a OWL (11&12-year-old)
- 11:30a Prairie Covenant Group

## 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.



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# Words from the President

**Kathy Converse, Prairie President**

3

It is appropriate that we have our Service Auction in March. With spring weather coming (and going), people are getting restless and are ready to get out of the house, work in their yards, and do things with others. It is always amazing to see the clever donations of our talented members and friends.



The auction is always an occasion to have fun and laugh together, which is a great spring tonic!! Thank you to Chris Porter, Nancy Wunderlin, and Orange Schroeder for organizing this year's auction.



Photo by Nancy Wunderlin

## Annual Spring Auction Results

**Chris Porter, Finance Chair**

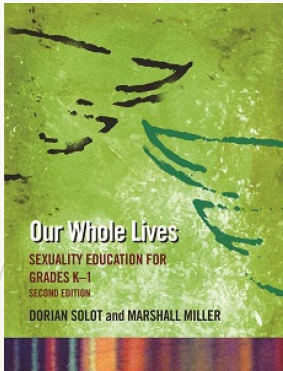
**Nancy Wunderlin, Administrator**

Thank you to all the donors and bidders who made our spring auction a success! We want to give a special thank you to our auctioneer, Orange Schroeder! Also, thank you to Barbara Chatterton Frye for making announcements, and to everyone helping out on the day of the auction including Marie Andrae, Andy Garst, Suzanne Gernandt, Heidi Hughes, and Casey Steinau.

We raised \$10,901! That is less than our budgeted goal of \$13,500. However, we still have some items and events available for purchase. We'll have more information on those soon. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Porter or Nancy Wunderlin.

# What's Going on in Religious Exploration?

Karen Deaton, Director of Religious Exploration



## OWL has been a joy!

Matt Wise, Casey Steinau, and I had the honor of being entrusted by parents to teach their 7- and 8-year-old children about human sexuality in OWL ([Our Whole Lives](#)) classes in recent weeks. Four smart, kind, curious children from Prairie RE and two from the community participated. We used an updated curriculum that was a pleasure to implement, with excellent picture books and fun activities.

I feel that OWL is one of the most worthwhile activities I've participated in since coming to Prairie almost 20 years ago. I encourage you to ask Matt, Casey, or me about facilitating OWL for children if you are interested in this work.

## Coming up in RE

- March 31 - Spring Celebration  
We'll have an egg hunt with prizes, plant seeds, and do crafts. All ages together. Volunteers needed!
- April 7 - Cooking day  
All ages together will prepare a treat for the congregation's potluck. Parent meeting for OWL age 11 & 12 will be in the Annex at noon.
- April 14 - Age group classes  
OWL for 11 & 12 year olds will meet in the Annex at 10 am. PUUPs will meet after the service. Volunteers to eat pizza with families and play with children during adult meeting are needed!
- April 21 - Intergenerational service  
There will be lots of music by Ken Lonquist! The RE children's choir will sing the prelude.  
OWL will have a session after lunch together.
- April 28 - Age group classes  
OWL for 11- & 12-year-olds will meet in the Annex at 10am

# Upcoming Program: Save the Date!

Renee Deschard, Program Committee Chair

Ken Lonnquist Will Perform on April 21st 10am

We are excited to have an Intergenerational Service on April 21, Earth Day, featuring Ken Lonnquist, who will serenade us with songs related to nature. Prairie will remember Ken Lonnquist and Friends for their performance of “Old Befana” in December 2022 and in past years.

From his website:

Ken Lonnquist brings laughter and song to audiences of all ages, exploring themes of nature, human nature, current events, and topical humor. Ken began writing musicals for the Children's Theater of Madison (CTM) in 1980, composing songs for eight full-scale musicals and a string of compact 50-minute shows.



Photo courtesy of Ken Lonnquist

*If you could fly*

*If you could fly*

*If you could fly and see with the eyes of a bird*

*Spreading your wings, flying in rings 'til you learn*

*The songs of the earth, the colors of life, every beautiful sight*

*You'd see the world like I do with a bird's eye view*

from “Birds Eye View” by Ken Lonnquist

# Programming Needs Your Talents

Rachel Long, Nominating Committee Chair &  
Renee Deschard, Program Committee Chair



Photo by Stephen Hocking on [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

Want to help with our Sunday morning program but you aren't a "committee type" of person?

Want to help plan programs but can't always commit to being there on Sunday morning?

Don't let that stop you from joining the Program Committee! The Program Committee is redefining roles so that more people can be involved with our Sunday program, and folks with different interests can find their niche.

1. Program Committee Members are the main program planners. They set the overall structure of our Sunday services and take turns serving as the coordinator for individual programs. Coordinators communicate with presenters, identify presiders, choose readings and readers, and work with the music team to find appropriate songs and other music for the services. They make sure programs are announced in our newsletters.
2. Program Assistants assure that things go smoothly at the Sunday service. They make sure orders of service and hymnals are distributed, get microphones to folks who need them, adjust lights if needed, and recruit people who will pass the offering baskets.
3. Music team members assure that we have accompanists for all our songs, schedule preludes and offertory music including choir performances, and help program coordinators choose songs appropriate for each presentation.

## Program Committee, cont.

1. Program Committee Chair organizes the program teams and is responsible for recruiting members. The chair sets the agenda and gets committee meetings scheduled, makes sure there are program coordinators and assistants for each service, makes annual budget requests, and partners with the committee to report to the congregation at the spring and fall parish meetings. The chair assures that committee policies and procedures are up to date. The chair writes newsletter articles to keep the congregation informed and surveys the congregation periodically about its wishes for our programs.

Each of these roles is satisfying and rewarding in its own way. All are essential to our Sunday services. The Nominating Committee is working with the Program Committee to identify Prairie folks who would like to serve in these roles. We need many of you to contribute your ideas, time, and talents! Please let us know if you are interested. You can speak with any of the following committee members:

**Program Committee:**

Renee Deschard, Barb Park,  
Robin Proud, Karen Smith

**Nominating Committee:**

Heidi Hughes, Rachel Long,  
Margit Moses, Paula Pachciarz



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# MidAmerica and General Assemblies Delegates and Voting

Renee Deschard, Prairie Vice President



8

The Board of Directors had a draft policy about selecting delegates to MidAmerica Regional Assembly and General Assembly. The board reviewed the policy and added information about voting during their meeting on March 19. The policy will be added to the current Policy & Procedure Manual on the members page of the website.

## Delegates

- The Board selects delegates prioritizing those in or entering leadership positions.
- Email our Administrator by April 10 if you would like to be a delegate at MidAmerica Regional Assembly (April 19-20) either virtually or in-person and by May 20 to be a delegate at virtual General Assembly (June 20-23).
- It is FREE for Delegates to attend all the business sessions this year at General Assembly.
- Prairie has money in our budget for attending the MidAmerica and General Assemblies. Email our Administrator to request funds.
- MidAmerica in person workshops will not be streamed for virtual participants but they will have on demand/virtual options for those attendees. General Assembly is fully virtual.

## Voting for General Assembly

- All members will receive a short survey (both electronic and paper formats will be available) for how they want to vote. This will be as anonymous as possible with our Administrator checking only membership status and tallying the numbers.
- Our three delegates will vote proportionally based on members' voting (i.e. if close to 66% of members voted yes on the first proposed amendment, then two delegates would vote yes and one would vote no).

## Resources

[MidAmerica Regional Assembly](#)

[General Assembly](#)

[Article 2](#)

[Article 2, four amendments](#)





## “So When Did You Know?”

Mary Mullen, Interweave Member

Interweave Invites You to a Book Discussion, Sunday, April 21. You don't even have to buy the book!

*She/Her. He/Him. They/Theirs.*

We've all heard Prairie people mention these pronouns in referring to themselves, but most of us have probably stumbled over using the pronouns *they* and *their* when referring to our transgender members and friends. It's hard to break old habits, but why even try?

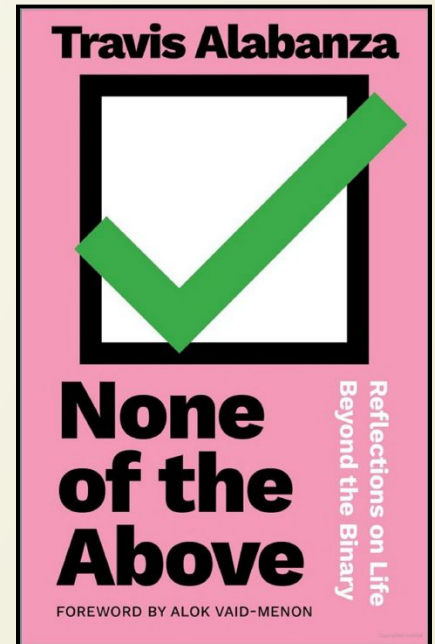
Prairie's Interweave group (LGBTQ folks and allies) is offering a chance to deepen our understanding of this issue by leading a facilitated discussion of the Prologue and Chapter 1 of the fascinating and often humorous book *None of the Above* by Travis Alabanza. Travis Alabanza is a racialized, young, queer person living in England. The selection is only 32 pages long and will be attached to an upcoming email.

The book as a whole is a series of seven essays based on seven phrases that have been directed at them for being transgender. The phrase for Chapter 1 is, “So when did you know?” Chapter 2's phrase is, “But I mean, *real* trans.”

A blurb from the publisher's website notes, “These phrases act as a lens through which they explore attitudes and misconceptions about gender, illuminating broader issues within a culture that insists on gender as a fixed identity. *None of the Above* explicates how these rigid ideas of gender are enforced by people—on others, but also on themselves.”

Give the Prologue and Chapter 1 a try. Then join us for a discussion after the Sunday service on April 21 from 11:30 am to 1 pm in the Annex. All are welcome. We are planning to have childcare during the meeting.

Need more convincing? Sample the first few paragraphs of Chapter 1 on the following page.



# “So When Did You Know?” cont.

10

Excerpt from *None of the Above*

1

“So when did you know?”

I sit in the doctor’s office.

He asks, “So when did you know?”

I say, “Always,” because I’ve heard simplicity gets results.

◦

It is one phrase that has spanned across my lifetime. No matter what setting, country, or occasion—it remains undefeatable. Like a cockroach that refuses to disappear, it doesn’t care which part of my life I am in. It will always emerge:

“So when did you know?”

People always ask me this, or if I am not around, they will be sure to ask my mother, or a friend, or even a teacher that I haven’t seen in years —“So when did Travis ... *you know?*” The “you” and “know” will come with verbalized italics. If an emoji could appear out of thin air, it would be the eyes darting to the side of the room accompanied by a vague hand gesture, as if to say: so when was it clear Travis would become a cross-dressing deviant who is straying from God’s path?

Childhood is always an interesting topic to raise if you want to get to know someone. Often a telltale sign of a relationship deepening is learning about your partner’s embarrassing school story or when they first broke the law. I can tell I am maybe entering the terrifying process



## A Letter from MOSES

**Pam Gates, Social Action Co-chair**

Every year MOSES sends a letter detailing accomplishments from the past year and thanking us for our participation. Here is their recap for 2023.



Dear MOSES Congregational/Organizational member,

Thank you for your continued support for MOSES! 2023 was another strong year. Below are some key highlights that your contributions helped us to accomplish:

- MOSES celebrated a new county jail agreement in April. The Board of Supervisors' Black Caucus, supported by MOSES, had successfully argued for a five-floor jail and an array of criminal legal reforms, but that plan was vetoed by the County Executive in favor of a six-floor proposal. The Black Caucus announced their support for the six-floor proposal in exchange for Sheriff Barrett agreeing to support many of these reforms, which would reduce the jail population and create a more humane criminal legal system.
- In March, the MOSES Religious Leaders Caucus hosted "A Time to Forgive," a wonderful conference at Door Creek Church featuring keynote speaker Dr. Robert Enright. We believe that forgiveness is a key to reforming the criminal legal system as detailed in Dr. Enright's book *8 Keys to Forgiveness*. MOSES offered this gift to the community for free.
- MOSES took on dyslexia as part of its scrutiny of the school-to-prison pipeline. Up to 20% of school-age kids are dyslexic, and often there is no systematic screening for dyslexia. The ultimate results can be, and often are, functionally illiterate adults. According to the Correctional Education Association, 75% of the people confined in the carceral system are functionally illiterate. To improve literacy teaching for all students, including those with dyslexia, MOSES successfully joined literacy advocates to support adoption of Act 20 to require schools statewide to use the Science of Reading, which is key to effective literacy education.

# A Letter from MOSES, cont.

12

- MOSES also supported and collaborated with statewide efforts to address Wisconsin's tenant eviction records retention policy. Eviction history has been cited as the most significant factor contributing to homelessness. Legal Action of Wisconsin (LAW) filed a petition with the Wisconsin Supreme Court to eliminate or greatly reduce Wisconsin's 20-year eviction records retention policy. Following hearings at which MOSES testified, the Court voted 4-3 to shorten access to most state eviction records from 20 years to two years.
- MOSES hired a new Community Organizer, James Morgan, in June. James educated himself while in prison, helped found MOSES upon his release, worked for JustDane for several years as a Peer Support Specialist, and attended and later worked for the Odyssey Project. As a result, James is well-equipped with the background and experience to support and lead MOSES's efforts to address our numerous social and prison reform justice issues. In addition, James is passionate about the world he wants to see and the efforts needed to achieve that vision. We are very pleased to have James with us as Organizer!
- We wrapped up the year with our annual Transformation Celebration gala, where we celebrated the success stories of three formerly incarcerated people who are now successful members of our community. This is a tradition MOSES values highly and we welcome your participation in the coming years.

With your continued support, we are optimistic about the new year and the opportunities it will offer. The ongoing commitment of our member congregations and organizations to that work is deeply appreciated!



Sandra Brown, President  
Phil Carlson, Treasurer

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