

Prairie Fire

June
2024



Photo credit: Irinia Iriser on unsplash.com

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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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Saturday 1

- 10a Women of Wonder (WOW)

Sunday 2

- 10a "Wisconsin Hmong 101" by Mai Zong Vue
- 10a RE Cooking Day
- 10a OWL- final session
- 11:30a Potluck Sunday

Wednesday 6

- 6:30p Program Committee Meeting

Sunday 9

- 10a "Celebrating Our Children" by Prairie RE
- 11:30a PUUPs
- 11:30a Visitor Orientation (Annex)

Saturday 15

- 1p Prairie Game Group

Sunday 16

- 10a "A Summer Solstice Celebration" by Karen Smith
- 10a RE Tie Dye Day
- 11:30a Interweave

Tuesday 18

- 6:30p Board Meeting

Thursday 20

- 7p Prairie Guys Group

Sunday 23

- 10a Service by Rev. Jim Foti
- 10a RE Bubbles in the Backyard
- 11:30a New Member Orientation
- 11:30a Choir Picnic

Thursday 27

- 6p Prairie Evening Potluck

Sunday 30

- 10a All Congregation Field Trip to Vilas Zoo

Office Hours

Administrator Nancy Wunderlin

Sun-Tue: on site in the Annex

Wed-Fri: working remotely

Pastoral Care, Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

Tues & Wed: on site in the Annex

Available for meetings upon request

Director of Religious Exploration Karen Deaton

Mon & Wed 12p and by appointment

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, Prairie President

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Every spring I find visitors in my garden. This year I have several large pink columbines, white iris, and alfalfa. I am sure that either birds or the many rodent species that reside in my yard have brought them to me. Because I don't cultivate or use any chemicals, the visitors may stay a season or indefinitely.



I similarly view Prairie UU as a garden. Visitors come all year, some for a short while, others put down roots and stay. Because we don't place restrictions or requirements on them, they can choose to stay for many seasons.

As we look to the future, let us tend to our Prairie garden as we do our own.



Photo credit: Kathy Converse

Attention Gardeners!

Karen Deaton, Landscape Subcommittee, Housing & Property Cmt.

Our Prairie landscape is beautifully naturalistic but it still needs care, especially weeding and pruning. We will have two workdays in June:

- Monday June 10 from 9:00 to 10:30 am
- Saturday June 15 from 9:00 to 10:30 am



Photo credit: Karen Deaton

Come for just part of the time, if you can't come for it all. Bring your work gloves and any favorite tools (marked with your name). We'll have some extra tools on hand. No worries if you're not a plant expert - I'll offer guidance and instruction, as well as cold lemonade. Questions or comments? Contact Karen at [wisconsinkaren \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:wisconsinkaren@gmail.com).

Rev. Ralph's Reflection

Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

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In their 2014 book, *The Paradox of Generosity*, authors Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson, both at the University of Notre Dame, make a persuasive case for understanding that the practice of generosity in our lives is, by its very nature, paradoxical. As their subtitle suggests, "Giving we receive, grasping we lose."

Our congregation recently learned that we will be recipients of a rather large bequest from the family of Prairie founding member, Elinor Loucks, for which we are deeply grateful! What we can all learn from this very generous gift is this about the paradox of generosity: there are those who give freely – generously – lavishly – and seem to increase in what they have. Others hold on tightly to what is entrusted to them and only seem to need more. There is an illogicality to it that seems obvious.

Smith and Davidson investigated this paradoxical behavior. Our logical minds would naturally infer that being generous would appear to exact a cost to the one giving. Generosity would seem to produce a deficit.



Photo credit: unsplash.com

But that's not what usually results. As Smith and Davidson discovered, The results of generosity are often instead unexpected, counterintuitive, win-win. Rather than generosity producing net losses, in general, the more generously people give of themselves, the more of many goods they receive in turn. Sometimes they receive more of the same kind of thing that they gave – money, time, attention, and so forth. But, more often and importantly, generous people tend to receive back goods that are often more valuable than those they gave: happiness, health, a sense of purpose, and personal growth.

And this is not mere speculation. The authors have filled their book with statistical analysis to back up their claims. The evidence is in. The more generous we are, the happier, healthier, more purposeful, less depressed, and interested we are in our personal growth.

Rev. Ralph's Reflection, con't.

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The question must be asked, "Why?" Why would being generous lead to such results? What is there about generosity that produces such outcomes?

It just might be that the more generous and open handed we are, the more we are living meaningful and authentic lives. It just might be that the more gracious and generous we are, the more we are living into what we are called to become as human beings.

Prairie wishes its members to be gracious and generous. By generously giving of our time, talents, and financial support, we can grow healthier and more purposeful in living out our congregation's Mission and Vision. Maybe there is something to that old saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Happy to be journeying with you,
Rev. Ralph



Photo credit: Jared Erundu on unsplash.com

What's Going on in Religious Exploration?

Karen Deaton, Director of Religious Exploration



Coming Up in RE

- June 2 - Cooking Day. Children through age 10 will work together to prepare a treat for the potluck. Games and crafts if time permits.
OWL for 11 & 12 year olds in the Annex from 10 to 1:30, including a lunch break. This is our final workshop!
- June 9 - Intergenerational Bridging Service. This annual event celebrates our children and our RE program. No RE classes.
Prairie Parent's Group (PUUPs) will meet after the service for a family pizza party followed by discussion from 12 to 1:00
- June 16 - Tie Dye in the backyard. Bring prewashed light-colored cotton t-shirts, socks, etc.
- June 23 - Giant bubbles in the backyard (or rain date for tie dye)
- June 30 - All-Prairie field trip to Vilas Zoo! No activities at Prairie.

About Summertime RE

During the summer, we will not have age-group Sunday School classes. Instead, we will have a variety of all-ages fun activities outside, whenever weather permits. Please apply sunscreen and insect repellent to children before our Sunday morning activities. See a separate article on Page 7 for information about our Family Camp weekend on July 12-14.

Donations for RE

We can use the following items, if they are unused in your home. You may drop off these items downstairs or ask Karen to pick them up:

- Board games, especially cooperative games
- Melamine bowls
- Large soft rugs - 8'x10' or 9'x12' - in good condition
- Big huggable stuffed animals
- Baby dolls
- Play-Doh
- Lego
- Children's clothes: pants, t-shirts, sun hats, and socks
- Sandbox toys
- Coloring books and activity books
- Soft, washable blankets
- No crayons, colored pencils, or markers at this time. We'll let you know when our ample supply is depleted.

We can always use snacks such as juice pouches, granola bars, and string cheese.

Family Camp Weekend

Karen Deaton, Director of Religious Exploration

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Photo credit: Friendship Center

Our Religious Exploration program has reserved the [Friendship Center](#) July 12 - 14 for a weekend of rustic fellowship for our RE families and volunteers. The Center is near Dodgeville in the scenic Driftless area. Activities may include campfires, hikes, and swimming in the lake at nearby Governor Dodge State Park if the weather is good; indoor games and crafts if it rains (there's a ping-pong table in the Lodge). We'll prepare meals in the Lodge kitchen or over a campfire. There is no staff on-site. We will do our own meal prep and cleanup.

Overnight accommodations are limited to 25 people. Tell Karen soon at [DRE \[at\] uuprairie.org](mailto:DRE@uuprairie.org) if your family *might* be interested in spending the weekend. Expressing interest is not a firm commitment but if we're running short on space the people who are later to indicate interest might not be accommodated. The Center is only about 40 miles from Madison so it is close enough for you to come out just for the day on Saturday.

We will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, June 12 at 7 pm to figure out details together – whether children will spend the night with their families or whether older kids will be in a bunkhouse with chaperones, what we want to eat, etc.

Regarding sleeping accommodations, the Center has a variety of options: bunk beds for 20 people in bunkhouses, one fold-out futon, 3 large platforms for setting up tents, and additional level ground for tents.

Rental per night is no more than \$15 per person per night; family discounts are available. We will share the cost of groceries, which will be determined later. Financial aid is available if the cost is prohibitive for your family.

Let Karen know if you might be interested in joining the fun – by email please at [DRE \[at\] uuprairie.org](mailto:DRE@uuprairie.org), not by mentioning it on a busy Sunday morning.

Spring Parish Meeting Results

Kathy Converse, President

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At our Annual Parish Meeting on 5/19/2024, the congregation elected new Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee members. The new members will assume their roles as of 7/1/2024 for two-year terms.

Board of Trustees

President: Ken Skog

Vice-President: Renee Deschard

At Large: Molly Plunkett

At Large: Susan Herr-Hoyman

At Large: John Wunderlin (partial term, ending 6/30/25)

Our Secretary, Dan Proud, and Treasurer, Chris Unger, remain in their current positions completing their terms on 6/30/25. Outgoing Board President Kathy Converse completes her term on 6/30/2024.

Nominating Committee

Mary Frantz

Barbara Chatterton

Nominating Committee members Heidi Hughes and Margit Moses remain on the committee, with terms ending 6/30/25.

Thank you to outgoing committee members Rachel Long and Paula Pachciarz.

During the Parish Meeting we announced the following committee chairs appointed by the Board of Trustees for two-year terms starting 7/1/2024.

Committee Chairs

Archives - Dirk Herr-Hoyman

Housing & Property - John Gernandt

Membership (co-chair) - Deesa Pence

Program - Renee Deschard

RE (co-chair) - Susan Herr-Hoyman

Social Action (co-chair) - Chris Porter

Thank you to outgoing committee chairs completing their terms on 6/30/2024:

Archives - Mary Mullen

Housing & Property - Randy Converse

Copies of all committee reports that were submitted at the Parish Meeting are available via Prairie's website. Go to the [For Current Members](#) page and select "2024 Parish Meeting Materials."

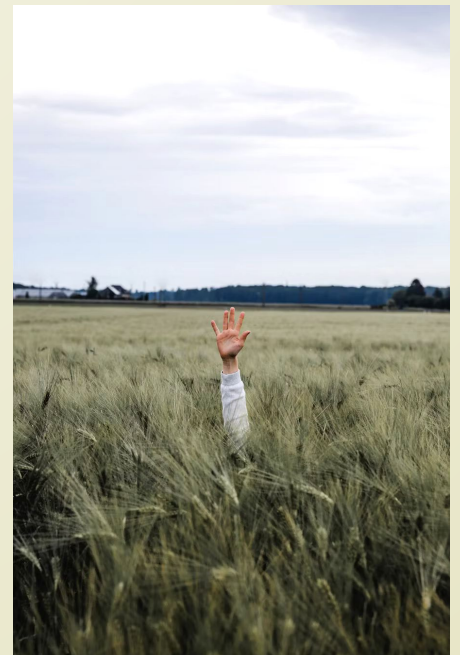


Photo credit: Jonny Caspari on unsplash.com

Spring Parish Meeting Results, con't.

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The following three motions were passed during the Spring Parish Meeting:

Motion: Prairie's GA delegates will vote on the Article II amendment as outlined in the May congregation survey on delegate voting.

Following a discussion, the motion was amended and seconded to state that the delegates would vote with the guidance of Prairie's survey results.

Motion: Call for unanimous consent to accept updated Mission Statement and Vision (shown below) as previously reviewed by the Board of Trustees and congregation.

Mission Statement

Guided by hope and kindness, we nurture a welcoming community that fosters caring connections, open-mindedness, lifelong learning, and spiritual growth while championing social justice and environmental stewardship.

Vision

We aspire to be a community where all voices are heard and valued, collectively acting as a catalyst for positive change, inspiring empathy and curiosity to champion a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

Motion: Be it resolved that Prairie will move forward with hiring up to a half time minister to share their ministry with our lay-led congregation. Further, be it resolved that a Minister Search Committee (including Board and Community representatives) be elected by the congregation to hire a minister.



Photo credit: UUA.org

Are YOU the Right Person to Serve on Our Minister Search Committee?

The Nominating Committee

At our Spring Parish Meeting, the congregation voted to start the search process for a half-time minister. The Minister Search Committee creates a “Congregational Record,” a packet of information about our congregation and what we are looking for, to help the right minister candidate find us. The Search Committee decides on procedures for advertising through the UUA and other places, and decides how to screen UUA and non-UUA candidates to best meet our needs. The committee then selects the person who is the best fit among available candidates to present to our congregation.

If YOU want to be on the Search Committee, you need to have the following:

- Commitment to read and consider information about minister candidates, and to participate in discussions with the Search Committee,
- Willingness to meet both in person and online,
- Agreement to keep confidential all information about candidates and Search Committee deliberations,
- Ability to not only represent your own opinions but also the needs and desires of our congregation as a whole, as you understand them.

If you are interested in serving on the Minister Search Committee, **please let the Nominating Committee know by Friday June 7**. Members of the Nominating Committee are Heidi Hughes, Rachel Long, Margit Moses, and Paula Pachciarz.

We need the Search Committee to begin its work as soon as possible so don't delay! Depending on the response to our call, we may not be able to include everyone who expresses interest but will do our best to nominate a group that broadly represents our membership.

Thank you for considering taking part in this important work.



Prairie and Second Baptist Joint Service

Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

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On Sunday, May 26, more than 30 Prairie members gathered at the Second Baptist Church for a joint service.

Karen Deaton read a Story for All Ages about the first Memorial Day celebration in Charleston, South Carolina by African Americans, May 1, 1865. The children from both congregations then went downstairs for activities and a snack.

The joint choirs led the singing of several spirituals with the gathered congregations. Second Baptist Choir Director, Sister JoEthel Fullilove, beautifully led the a *cappella* singing with uplifting spirit and grace.

Prairie Minister, Rev. Ralph, and Second Baptist Minister, Rev. Anthony, led the service. Rev. Ralph delivered a reflection titled, "Memorial Day: Restoring Memory, Memorializing Right."

It was a beautiful service, enjoyed by all.

Seeking Prairie Retreat Activity Leaders

Renee Deschard & Nancy Wunderlin

Our annual Prairie retreat will again be at Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville, on Sept 27-29, 2024.

Every year, people lead activities (crafts, games, hikes, discussions, etc.) to enhance our retreat experience. If you are willing to lead (or co-lead) an activity, please fill out this form <https://tinyurl.com/24activityleader> by June 30th. Also, if you really want to see a particular activity offered, please fill it out and put that in the comments section.

Carl Wacker made a lovely [retreat video](#) that gives a good overview of what this favorite event looks like. An initial schedule and registration will be available in July. Hope to see you all there in September!



Photo credit: Renee Deschard

Wisconsin UU State Action Network

Molly Plunkett, Social Action Committee Member



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This timely article is from a recent WUUSAN Weekly Events Calendar. If interested in receiving the calendar directly, you can subscribe at [Sign Up](#).

Voter Registration & PRIDE

PRIDE arrives in June and many of you are already attending. Take advantage of these public gatherings to get voters registered for this fall's election. WUUSAN would like to help with flyers, table skirts, and help staffing your table. Plan now to get out into your community, meet your neighbors, encourage them to vote in November!

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|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| • Wausau Pride | June 1 | Info |
| • Pridefest Milwaukee | June 6-8 | Info |
| • Chippewa Valley Pride | June 8 | Info |
| • Stevens Point Pride | June 14 | Info |
| • The Big Gay Market - Madison | June 15 | Info |
| • Viroqua Pride | June 22 | Info |
| • Sheboygan Pride Picnic | June 22 | Info |
| • Fox Valley Pride | June 22 | Info |
| • Pride Picnic Fond du Lac | June 23 | Info |
| • Open Door Pride - Sturgeon Bay | June 29 | Info |
| • Oshkosh Pride | June 29 | Info |
| • Kenosha Pride | July 6 | Info |
| • Pride in the Park - LaCrosse | September 7 | Info |
| • N.E.W. Pride - Green Bay | September 20&21 | Info |



This photo of the garden outside the Allied Wellness Center's social worker's office shows a new planting added by John Lewis and Molly Plunkett this spring. Other perennials were planted last year by Prairie folk.

Photo credit: Molly Plunkett

From the Annals of Prairie's History: How Prairie's Prairie Came To Be*

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Mary Mullen



Photo credit: Mary Mullen, 2004

Count on Prairie people to always be thinking of their commitment to the natural environment. In late 1987, as building remodeling plans got deadly serious, at least one prairie enthusiast started thinking about developing landscaping that would give our grounds the look to match our name.

Coyly, the 11/3/87 Board minutes mention that “a Prairie member” had pledged money for a prairie plant garden and would match up to \$500. This offer was passed on to members at the Parish meeting of 11/22/87. Nearly 30 years later (36.5 years later in 2024), one might immediately think of Galen Smith. However, the Smiths still lived in Whitewater where Galen taught botany and biology at UW. The minutes are mum on the identity of the would-be donor.

A few months later when a site plan for the remodeling was presented at a Parish Meeting on 3/30/88, the idea of prairie plantings was clearly alive...Then Prairie's prairie seemed to drop into a black hole for a year. Neither minutes nor *Prairie Fires* say another word about creating a prairie – until the spring of 1989. There are reasons. First of all, the remodeling wasn't started until 8/1988 and the congregation didn't get into the building until 12/18/88. You can't plant a prairie or even grass seed around Christmastime in Wisconsin, and while the 1988 site plan had shown prairie gardens, the total cost for the remodeling had not included a nickel for landscaping of any kind.

But our mystery donor, like any persistent benefactor, was about to come out of the wings. She - yes, *she* - was Diane Derouen, and she was more or less outed in the 4/4/1989 *Prairie Fire*, which divulged that Diane had found a grad student, Rory Nelson, to design a prairie planting and that a plan for said prairie would be presented after a Prairie service ten days hence.

There was one important hurdle to pass. A city permit was needed and the neighbors could actually quash plans for a non-traditional planting. The Board, in mid-April, was “interested” in how the neighbors would respond and in the next month, a neighborhood meeting was held. Sure enough, there were some objections.

*This article is adapted from “Prairie's Prairie” by Mary Mullen in *Prairie UU Society: 50 Years in the Life of a Congregation, 1967-2017. Vol. 1, pp. 103-6.*

Prairie's Prairie, con't.

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“Our prairie landscaping plan received somewhat less support from five neighbors who came to a meeting about the plan on Thursday, May 18,” starts a paragraph in an article written by Diane Derouen for the 5/31/89 *Prairie Fire*. She goes on:

They expressed special concerns about all grasses and that a prairie garden might become a weed patch. To allay their concerns, we gave them a list of addresses of several prairie gardens in the Madison area and revised the proposed plan by eliminating the tallest grasses such as big bluestem. If more than 15 of the 29 near neighbors notify the city that they object to the original plan, we will have to revise the plan further, probably by eliminating the grasses altogether and planting only the showy flowering prairie plants such as Blazing Star, Prairie Bush Clover, Nodding Wild Onion, Black-eyed Susan, and Purple Cone Flower. If no grass species are planted, no city permit is required. It won't be a real prairie without grasses such as needle grass but our prairie garden will still be an interesting and beautiful addition to our meeting house site.

Fortunately for the prairie, the threshold of opponents did not materialize and the permit was forthcoming. The 5/31/89 *Prairie Fire* notes that donations of \$354 had been received at the 5/14/89 service and with the matching dollars from Diane would be sufficient to purchase seed and some plants. In addition, Brent Haglund donated seeds from the prairie at Aldo Leopold's shack on the Wisconsin River. What a neat connection to the writer of *A Sand County Almanac*, a man looked up to and revered by every knowledgeable Wisconsin nature philosopher! Pasque Flowers and Prairie Smoke would be planted in the fall.

The initial planting was completed on 6/8/1989. Board minutes from 6/19/89 note that Diane would be providing weeding/mowing guidelines. Plus, neighbor Jane Boltz had volunteered to care for the new prairie!

And so our signature prairie had come to be.



This year's prairie burn occurred on 4/21/2024. Overseeing it was Gary Gates. Photo credits: Mary Mullen

2024 Madison College Annual Spring Pow Wow

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Ron Frye

Our circle was widened and Native American heritage was honored at the April 27 Madison College Spring Pow Wow.

Eight Prairie members attended the event at MATC's Truax campus: Ruth Doherty, Mary Mullen, Randy Converse, Barbara and Ron Frye with Ron's son, Molly Plunkett and her daughter's family, Ken Skog and his daughter, and Margit Moses and her daughter.

Ken joined the Veterans Dance and reported pride from the rare feeling of being honored for his service. Molly, her daughter, and her granddaughters participated in the Interfaith dance as triple legacies.

The Men's Grass Dance evokes images of Prairie grass as it bridges traditional style and Fancy Dance.



Photo credits: Barbara Frye