

Prairie Fire



Photo by Dave Lowe on unsplash.com

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June 2025 Calendar

Please see www.uuprairie.org for detailed descriptions.

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Sunday 1

- 10a "What a Year!" by Prairie RE
- 10a RE: Intergenerational Bridging Service
- 11:30a Potluck Sunday

Saturday 7

- 9a RE Moving Day
- 10a Prairie WOW (Women of Wonder)

Sunday 8

- 10a Service: "Why Rich People Cheat and Why We Let Them" by Jess Calarco, sponsored by Badger Talks
- 10a RE: Tie-dye in the backyard
- 11:30a PUUPs (Prairie UU Parents)
- 11:30a Visitor Orientation
- 11:30a Archives Committee

Saturday 11

- 1p RE Moving Day

Sunday 15

- 10a Service: "Summer Reads" by Prairie
- 10a RE: TBD

Thursday 19

- 7p Prairie Guys Group

Saturday 21

- 1p Prairie Game Group
- 2p Book Discussion Group

Sunday 22

- 10a Service
- 10a RE: TBD
- 11:30a Prairie Journey Circle

Saturday 28

- 2p Prairie Pride Picnic

Sunday 29

- 10a Service by Mary Sue Reutebuch
- 10a RE: TBD
- 12p Prairie Leadership Forum

Office Hours

Pastoral Minister Mary Sue Reutebuch
Most Tues and Thurs & by appointment

Administrator Nancy Wunderlin
Sun-Tue on site in the Annex
Wed-Fri working remotely

Director of Religious Exploration Karen Deaton
Wed 1-4pm and by appointment



Photo from uua.org

Invitation to Add Your Voice

Prairie's vision statement opens with, "We aspire to be a community where all voices are heard and valued." Toward that end, all Prairie members and friends are invited to contribute a column to the *Prairie Fire* on a topic of their choice. Please send to [prairiefire\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:prairiefire[at]uuprairie.org) by the 21st of the month for inclusion in the following issue.

Ministry Moments Shared

Mary Sue Reutebuch, Pastoral Minister

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Beyond Politics: Answering the Call of Compassion



Recently, a friend approached me with a thoughtful question: "How can we be hard on harmful policies without sounding political?" This question strikes at the heart of a common misunderstanding. When we stand with those who suffer under unjust policies, we aren't making a political statement—we're answering the fundamental call of our shared humanity and our UU values and principles. Our first principle affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person while our second calls us to justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. These aren't political positions; they're moral commitments that transcend partisan divides. When policies harm vulnerable members of our community—whether they're immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, or those living in poverty—our response isn't political calculation but moral necessity.

The prophetic voices throughout history have often been accused of being political when they were simply insisting on recognizing the humanity in those that society has marginalized. When we provide sanctuary to those fleeing violence, advocate for accessible healthcare, or march for racial justice, we aren't engaging in politics—we're embodying love in action. Our principles don't ask us which way the political winds are blowing before determining whose humanity deserves recognition and protection. Rather, they call us to a radical inclusivity that honors the sacred worth in every person, especially those most vulnerable to harm.

The beauty of our UU tradition lies in its call to practical compassion. We are not asked merely to hold worthy values in our hearts, but to manifest them in the world through concrete acts of care and solidarity. When we speak out against harmful policies, we do so not because we've chosen a political team but because we've chosen to honor our deepest commitments to human dignity and interdependence. In this way, what might appear "political" to some is actually the natural expression of a spirituality that refuses to separate belief from action. Our commitment to our shared values and principles calls us not to partisan allegiance but to a higher loyalty—to that still, small voice within that recognizes our kinship with all who suffer and refuses to remain silent in the face of injustice. This is not politics. This is love made visible!



What's Going on in Religious Exploration?

Karen Deaton, Director of Religious Exploration



Summer Brings Outdoor Fun and Exciting Changes

This summer, our children's Religious Exploration activities will move outdoors whenever the weather allows! Fun will include giant bubbles and homemade ice cream in the backyard, as well as field trips and service projects. To help keep everyone safe and comfortable, please apply sunscreen and insect repellent to your child before arrival. Sun hats and labeled water bottles are also highly recommended.

We'll kick off our summer adventures on June 8 with a Tie-Dye Party in the backyard! Bring along any white or light-colored fabric items you'd like to dye—prewashed cotton items work best.

To make these activities successful, we rely on volunteers each Sunday. If you're interested in helping out, I'd love to hear from you!



Prairie Maypole, April 27 2025.
Long exposure photo
by Karen Deaton

Introducing Summer PUUPs – A New Twist!

Traditionally, on the second Sunday of each month, Prairie families gather downstairs for pizza, then kids enjoy playtime while the Prairie UU Parents group (PUUPs) meets for discussion upstairs. This summer, we're mixing things up!

On the second Sunday of June, July, and August, families are invited to pack a picnic. After the service, we'll head to a local park for lunch and fellowship. Our childcare team will help supervise the kids so adults can relax and connect. If you know of a great playground or have questions, please reach out!

For the latest updates, check our [website calendar](#) or keep an eye on my weekly family email. If you're not on the list, just send a note to **DRE[at]uuprairie.org** to be added.

All Voices Guest Column

John Wunderlin, Board Trustee

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HVAC Upgrade Saves Energy and Boosts Sustainability

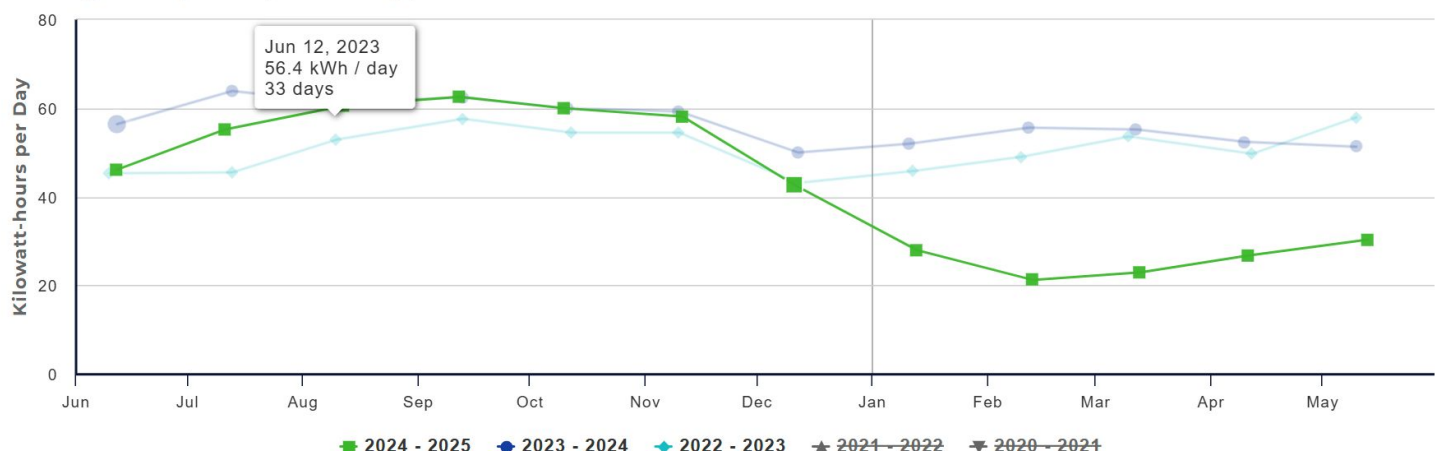
During our recent remodel, we faced a challenge with our new HVAC unit, which required 3-phase electrical service while our location only had single-phase power. A Roto Phase Converter was installed to convert the electricity, allowing the HVAC to function. However, this meant running the converter constantly, consuming significant electricity and, after years of use, producing a disruptive high-pitched whine that signaled it was nearing the end of its life.



Determined to find a better solution, John Gernandt and I explored options with vendors. A Johnson Controls specialist recommended replacing the HVAC's 3-phase compressor with a single-phase unit which eliminates the need for the converter. We completed the upgrade this past January. The results speak for themselves. Not only did this eliminate the noise, but it also slashed our electricity use—saving the equivalent of an entire typical residential home's consumption. We estimate the compressor replacement will pay for itself in under 2 years.

This upgrade aligns with our commitment to sustainability, reducing our environmental footprint and potentially decreasing the number of solar panels needed if we pursue solar energy for the Meeting House. We're thrilled with the outcome and will keep you updated on future green initiatives.

Average Daily Use (kWh / day)



New Flooring for the RE Space

Karen Deaton, RE Director

The current flooring in the Religious Exploration space (the Meeting House basement) has deteriorated over time. Moisture that wicks up from the soil through the concrete foundation has caused damage to the adhesive and flooring. After about 15 years of service, the linoleum is cracking and coming loose in places.

Thanks to the generous financial support of our community and the dedicated efforts of our Housing & Property chair John Gernandt, we are excited to announce that the old flooring will soon be replaced with a non-toxic coating that will provide a moisture barrier. This work is scheduled for the week of June 16–20.

Help Needed: Moving Volunteers

To prepare for the flooring work, we need to clear out the Meeting House basement. We're organizing 2 moving days to transport boxes of books, toys, craft supplies, and games to the Annex. Professional movers will handle the heavy tables, file cabinets, and bookcases.

If you can lift and carry, please join us on one of these moving days:

- Saturday, June 7: 9:00 to 11:00 am
- Saturday, June 14: 1:00 to 4:00 pm

There will be donuts, fruit, and plenty of camaraderie!

Prairie Pride Picnic

KD Thompson, Interweave

On Saturday, June 28 at 2pm, Interweave is hosting a Pride Picnic in the backyard of the Annex. We have invited folks from Reeb and FUS to join us. Please help spread the word to anyone you know who might be interested.

Interweave is a small group so I hope that many of you will join us, even if you haven't been involved with Interweave before. We need all the allies we can get! And if you have Pride gear, please bring or wear it!



Photo courtesy of [Unitarian Universalist Church West](#)

Seeking Prairie Retreat Activity Leaders

Renee Deschard, Retreat Team

Prairie is gearing up for our annual retreat which will again be at Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville. Save the dates of Sept 26-28, 2025.

Every year, people lead activities such as crafts, games, hikes, or discussions to enhance our retreat experience. If you are willing to lead or co-lead an activity, please [fill out this form by June 30](#). Or, if you really want to have a particular activity at the retreat, 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 the event looks like. Also, [here is a slideshow](#) explaining the different accommodations available this year along with a general overview of the site and event. A schedule and registration will be available in July.

This year's retreat organizers are: Marie Andrae, Karen Deaton, Renee Deschard, Mary Sue Reutebuch, and Nancy Wunderlin. Any questions? Contact [retreat\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:retreat[at]uuprairie.org).



Photo courtesy of Renee Deschard

Prairie Contacts

Ken Skog, President - [president\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:president[at]uuprairie.org)

Mary Sue Reutebuch, Pastoral Minister - [minister\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:minister[at]uuprairie.org)

Karen Deaton, Director of Religious Exploration - [dre\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:dre[at]uuprairie.org)

Nancy Wunderlin, Administrator - [admin\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:admin[at]uuprairie.org)

Anne Pryor, Prairie Fire Editor - [prairiefire\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:prairiefire[at]uuprairie.org)

Please see www.uuprairie.org for other contacts, including board members and committee chairs.

Spring Parish Meeting Results

Ken Skog, President

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At our Spring Parish meeting on May 18, 2025, the congregation elected new members to the Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee. The new members will assume their roles as of July 1, 2025 for two-year terms.

Board of Trustees

Secretary: Paula Pachciarz

Treasurer: Tim Scott

At Large Trustee: Marne Schulenburg (partial term ending 6/30/26)

Continuing Board members are Ken Skog, President; Renee Deschard, Vice President; Molly Plunkett, Trustee; and John Wunderlin, Trustee

Nominating Committee

Suzanne Gernandt

Thank you to the Nominating Committee for finding those candidates: Heidi Hughes, Chair; Margit Moses, Barbara Chatterton Frye, and Karleen Tyksinski.

Thank you to our departing officers: Chris Unger, Treasurer; Dan Proud, Secretary; Susan Herr-Hoyman, Trustee; and Heidi Hughes, Nominating Committee Chair.

Chris Unger presented a report from the Reserves Committee and made the following motion concerning management of Prairie's monetary reserves:

Motion: Manage the Prairie financial reserves through the use of three funds:

A) Capital Asset Reserve Fund

B) Bequest and Principles Reserve Fund

C) Contingency Reserve Fund

The motion was approved.

Thank you to members of the Financial Reserves Committee: Chris Porter, Chris Unger, Gary Gates, Aileen Nettleton and Molly Plunkett.

Copies of the Reserves Committee report and all committee reports that were submitted at the Parish Meeting are available on the following pages of this *Prairie Fire* issue as well as via Prairie's website. Go to the "For Current Members" page and select "2025 Parish Meeting Materials."

Spring Parish Meeting Committee Reports & Minister Report

Archives Committee

Chair: Dirk Herr-Hoyman

Members: Mary Mullen, Barb Park, Bob Park, Rosemary Dorney, Jason Deschard, Susan Herr-Hoyman

This committee maintains the history of Prairie in several forms/places: the two-volume *Prairie UU Society in the Life of a Congregation* (copies still available), <http://archives.uuprairie.org>, Google Drive for Archives Committee, and the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS).

New Work:

- Articles on the life of Dean Schroeder and Andy Summers for *Prairie Fire*.
- Share info on members serving on specific committees by year with the Nominating Committee.
- Update spreadsheet of Prairie members going back to 1967, including updates for deaths. This is maintained on Google Drive.
- Attend MidAmerica Region History and Heritage Committee about turning points in a congregation's history.

Ongoing:

- Work on sending materials to the Wisconsin Historical Society (board minutes, etc).
- Save OOS (order of service) for recent services to archive.uuprairie.org
- Save audio of recent services (from Zoom recording) to archive.uuprairie.org

Caring Committee

Chair: Heidi Hughes

Members: Erin Bosch, Aileen Nettleton, Barbara Chatterton, Suzanne Gernandt, Margit Moses, Susanne Oliver, Mary Sue Reutebuch

Activities

Since our Fall parish meeting on November 24, 2024, the Caring Committee has continued to provide attention to our members as needed. This means lending a listening ear and helping to do small tasks when people are recovering from illness, surgery, stressful situations, or bringing a new baby home, as well as others.

Caring Committee, cont.

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We communicate regularly via email when the needs of members arise, sharing information as needed. Sadly, since November 2024, some of our members as well as the wider congregation were actively helping with planning and supporting memorial services for Dean Schroeder and Andy Somers.

The Membership Committee is doing a good job in passing on the names of new members and departing members so we can add or delete these new people/families to our caring groups.

Accomplishments

- We welcomed our new minister, Mary Sue Reutebuch, in January, 2025 to our congregation and this committee! Ministers are extremely helpful with their expertise in pastoral care, knowledge of social services, training in planning and presiding for memorial services, and caring and comforting all of us. They usually have exceptionally good skills for the work of a Caring Committee!
- We met as a committee on March 11, 2025 at Mary Sue's home, which was very memorable with a delicious breakfast Mary Sue prepared for all. It was a good regrouping and a chance for Mary Sue to inform us how she would like to be helpful in the work of this committee. We had a good discussion, left with some action plans, and will carry-on doing our work as members' needs arise.
- We now have all recent meeting notes from the Caring Committee stored on a Prairie shared drive, thanks to Prairie Administrator Nancy Wunderlin.

Supporting Our Mission/Vision Statements

As members of this committee, we continue to be guided by our own hope and kindness to care about the members we take into our groups. We are all diverse members of this community and bring our own talents and skills that can help us care for others.



Photo by Getty Images on
unsplash.com

Committee on Ministry (COM)

Chair: Anne Pryor

Members: Johanna Hatch, Avalon Haykus



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Activities/Accomplishments

The purpose of the Committee on Ministry (COM) is to strengthen and support the congregational health of Prairie by promoting effective ministries in all areas of Prairie's mission and vision.

The COM was on hiatus during Prairie's search for a new minister. It was revived in the wake of Mary Sue's hiring. The COM chair met with the board to clarify some questions about the committee's mission before we began to operate again and so that we could complete a revision of the committee description for Prairie's Policies and Procedures document (see Chapter 6).

Since January, the three COM members have been meeting monthly with our minister, providing support, clarifications, and discussing issues of importance.

We sent a letter introducing Mary Sue to the other three UU congregations in our immediate area and Rev. Ralph sent it to Second Baptist. We later found out that we also should have alerted the Mid-America district. If we had, Mary Sue would have made connections with valuable support resources within the UUA and district. Thanks to Ken Skog's help, that connection was made.

Concerns/Suggestions/Future Goals

The COM is required to conduct an assessment of the society every 3 years. The assignment reads: "The committee will help to conduct a formal congregational evaluation of professional and shared ministry every three years, for the purpose of evaluating how well PUU is living up to its mission and vision." We are approaching the next 3-year period and so the COM will begin to plan for conducting that assessment.

Based on discussion with the board and the leadership team, the COM has a clear idea on how to approach this task. The assessment will address how the congregation feels about how well we as an entity are living up to our mission and vision. Two basic questions will be: 1) What is Prairie doing well to meet its mission and vision? 2) What could Prairie be doing better? We will plan an active forum in which people exchange ideas on these two questions and hold it in multiple sessions to make it as accessible as possible for all segments of the Prairie community.

Finance Committee

Chair: Chris Porter

Members: Chris Unger (Prairie Treasurer), Suzanne Gernandt, Gary Gates

Current Financial Status:

- Prairie's finances remain strong. Income and expenses for 2025 are reasonably on track. Rentals, auction and interest are tracking higher than planned. We do expect to have a \$27,000 expense for RE flooring that was not in the budget. This is to mitigate flooding issues. We can cover this out of reserves as a capital expense.
- We received a second very generous donation of \$25,000 (total donation \$50,000) from the Loucks family. People have shared ideas on how the money should be used. We expect to make decisions with congregational input later this year.

Finance Management:

- An ad hoc committee to establish how Prairie manages its money was formed. The committee basically proposed managing the finances in three funds:
 - o Capital reserves. This would track expected capital needs and fluctuate based on the age and expected life and cost of assets.
 - o Bequests and principles. This fund would be invested and spent in keeping with Prairie's mission and vision.
 - o All remaining reserves. This is to include maintaining a 6-month contingency reserve. The contingency reserve would be based on the 6-month average of expenses over the previous 3 years.

Financial Overview as of March 31, 2025:

- Prairie had \$375,000 in the bank as of March 31, 2025, an increase from \$296,000 on the same date last year. The current balance includes the \$50,000 Loucks gift.
- We hold five certificates of deposit (CDs), each starting with a \$25,000 deposit, and the remainder of our funds is mostly in a money market account. The checking account balance is primarily to cover one month's expenses. We may move additional money into CD's soon.

Debt Situation:

- Prairie has a loan of \$8,000 from First UU, which is only payable if the Prairie UU Society dissolves. The meeting house and annex are owned outright without any debt.



Hospitality Committee

Chair: Ruth Ellen Saul

Members:

Barbara Chatterton, Evan Creed, Lynn Currie, Sue Ellerhorst, Susanne Oliver, Paula Pachciarz, Tim Reutebach, Rick Ruecking, Ann Sawyer, Patty Stockdale, Chelse Tokarczyk, Daniel Tokarczyk, Katie Turner, Ari Lo, Chris Unger, Nancy Wunderlin

Activities

- Coffee service provided before and after Sunday services
- Monthly Sunday potluck: coordination, execution, and cleanup
- Hospitality participation in other Prairie events, such as a joint service with other congregations off-site or providing coffee supplies to groups meeting at Prairie facilities
- Coordination with maintenance committee to keep kitchen operations functioning well

Concerns/Suggestions/Future Goals

Become Prairie's largest committee, so committee members provide coffee service labor only once every several months

Housing and Property Committee

Chair: John Gernandt

Members: Al Nettleton, John Wunderlin, Gene Kain, Heidi Hughes, Gary Gates, Ruth Ellen Saul, Randy Converse

Gardening Subcommittee: Karen Deaton, chair

Aesthetics Subcommittee (maintains the Prairie UU "ambiance"): Heidi Hughes, Barbara Chatterton

Proposed Spring and Summer Projects:

- Contract signed and deposit made for RE basement flooring
- Railing for the Annex porch
- Lighting for UU sign at curb
- Gates between buildings
- Solar panels (working with Spectrum on delayed proposal due to tariffs on equipment and cuts on grants)
- Raju and John have checked on yard equipment for the summer
- Check chimney cap mortar



Membership Committee

Chairs: Deesa Pence and Patty Stockdale

Members: Judy Lazarus, Paula Pachciarz, YOU!

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By the numbers:

Number of members May 2025: 103

Number of members from last parish meeting November 2024: 105

Number of new or rejoined members so far in 2024: 10

Number of members who became friends or resigned: 10

Number of members who passed: 2 (Dean Schroder and Andy Somers)

Activities and Accomplishments

- Greet at every Sunday Service - Membership Committee members greet attendees on Sunday mornings.
- Conduct monthly Visitor Orientations - Membership Committee members meet on the second Sunday of each month with interested visitors or newcomers in the Annex to discuss Prairie and UUism.
- Host monthly Circle Potlucks on the fourth Thursday evenings
- Conduct New Members Orientations and New Member Recognitions as needed. Prairie welcomed the following folks as new members so far in 2025: Laura Clark, Tim Reutebuch, Ari Lo, Dory Lightfoot, Katie Turner, Josh Turner, Laura Long, Mariana Garcia, Adam Morgan, and Marnie Schulenburg. Next upcoming New Member Recognition is May 4.
- Create Customized Prairie Brochures for *Are You Interested In Prairie?*, *Stay Connected*, *Values and Principles*, and *Social Action*
- Update Visitor Folders and New Member Folders - We give Visitor Folders to those who seem more than casually interested in Prairie and New Member Folders to those who have recently joined.
- Update contact information for members and friends in our Breeze database. Paper Membership Directories are available upon request.
- Update visitor tracking spreadsheet for weekly visitors who complete Visitor Forms.
- Update yard signs to publicize Prairie's weekly Sunday programs.
- Email members and friends to let people know how to stay informed via *PrairieNews*, *PrairieViews*, *UUWorld*, the Interest and Talent Survey, and the *Prairie Fire*.
- Endeavor to keep newer and long-time members connected to and involved with Prairie by reaching out by calling or emailing them.
- Create computer generated name tags for new people and to replace lost ones
- Provide pronoun pins and stickers for name tags.

Membership Committee, cont.

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Concern

The website needs refreshing and updating. It has been serving the church for 5 or so years and needs an overhaul. It is the main conduit for attracting visitors to our congregation and for informing current members and friends.

We would welcome new participants to our Membership Committee.

Nominating Committee

Chair: Heidi Hughes

Members: Margit Moses, Barbara Chatterton, and Karleen Tyksinski

Activities/Accomplishments

Recruitment

The central function of the Nominating Committee is to find people who have the interest, energy, and skills to serve in Prairie's many leadership positions.

We do 3 different types of recruitment:

1. We nominate candidates for elected positions including Board, Committee on Ministry, and Nominating Committee members. The congregation votes to affirm these nominees at either the Spring Parish Meeting (Board and Nominating Committee), or the Fall Parish Meeting (Committee on Ministry.)
2. We recommend candidates to the board for positions that they appoint, specifically committee chairs.
3. We assist with identifying people who can serve as members of committees (the chair of each committee is primarily responsible for recruiting its members), and people who serve Prairie in other ways, such as the *Prairie Fire* editor. One of the ways we try to identify people's skills and interests, if not by casual conversation, is the Skills and Interest Survey link that was publicized in several ways this year.

Since our Fall Parish Meeting, we acquired a new minister, Mary Sue Reutebuch. Anne Pryor, committee chair for the Committee on Ministry, continued on in her role. We helped recruit Johanna Hatch and Avalon Haykus to join this committee.

In December, Mary Frantz, due to some health concerns, resigned from the Nominating Committee and Karleen Tyksinski volunteered to step up. She began work immediately, even though she wasn't formally elected by the congregation to her 2-year term until March 23.

Nominating Committee, cont.

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During this time of information-gathering about who is staying in their position and who is stepping down, current Board Treasurer, Chris Unger, brought a very important point to leadership's attention. He asked the question, "How are we doing in taking care of all our volunteer leaders and committee members? How are they being supported and shown appreciation?" As a committee, we informally conducted interviews of all board members and committee chairs, asking all how they feel valued. We plan on acting upon these needs of appreciation and value with an end-of-year recognition, as we have done in the past, but also are considering new ways of celebrating our ever important volunteers.

This has been a very active time for the Nominating Committee. Since June is the end of the parish calendar year, this means it is the end of some terms for board members and Nominating Committee members. Members are either stepping down at the end of their terms, continuing on for another term, or stepping down, wishing not to complete a full term.

We have successfully recruited new and returning Board members and committee chairs for all open positions. We plan to present to the congregation the following slate of candidates for elected positions for 2-year terms ending 6/30/27 at the Spring Parish Meeting:

Board Secretary: Paula Pachciarz

Board Treasurer: Tim Scott

At Large Board Member: Marnie Schulenburg

Nominating Committee: Suzanne Gernandt

We will forward our slate of candidates to the board.

The Nominating Committee wishes to thank all members whom we interviewed for these positions, who gave careful consideration and decided this was not the right time nor the right fit for them. Prairie has many skilled and talented people and It takes all of us to give something of ourselves to keep Prairie alive, vibrant, and growing into our collective future.



Program Committee

Chair: Renee Deschard

Voting Members: Karen Deaton, Barb Park, Robin Proud, Ann Sawyer, Josh Turner

Non-voting Members: Nancy Wunderlin, Mary Sue Reutebuch (DRE and RE Committee Chairs have ongoing invitations to all meetings).

Thank you to Rev. Ralph Tyksinski and Karen Smith for their Program Committee contributions.

Activities/Accomplishments

A huge thank you to all of our Prairie presiders, presenters, coordinators, readers, program assistants, musicians, tech & Zoom helpers, greeters, and hospitality people who make our Sunday services so wonderful!

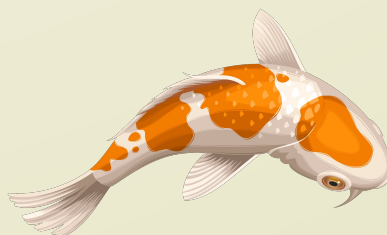
In January, we said goodbye (only as minister!) to Rev. Ralph Tyksinski and we welcomed our new pastoral minister Mary Sue Reutebuch who first presented "Still Climbing the Justice Mountain: Lessons Not Yet Learned from MLK" on January 12.

The Raging Grannies regaled us with music on February 2. On March 9, our talented youth performed Robin Proud's play and we had 82 people attending in person and 8 via Zoom. April 6 saw our now annual Poetry Share service. On June 8, we will have the Badger Talk "Why Rich People Cheat and Why We Let Them." (We are able to have 2 Badger Talks per calendar year).

Prairie members and friends who spoke in the past 6 months included: Ken Skog, Karen Smith, Avalon Haykus, Robin Proud, and Ari Lo. Sunday services also included local non-profit organizations such as Just Bakery (who will sell baked goods 3-4 times per year), MOSES (Madison Organizing in Strength, Equity, and Solidarity) and the Dane County Humane Society.

Information

During Sunday services, we've had committee chairs talk about their committees (what they do, who is on their committee). This came from a suggestion at a Leadership Forum. Thus far in 2025, Social Action has talked about their committee. RE will talk about their committee in June. In 2024 we had: Hospitality, AV & Tech, Membership and Archives.



Program Committee, cont.

Concerns/Suggestions/Future Goals

Please feel free to email [program\[at\]uuprairie.org](mailto:program[at]uuprairie.org) at any time if you have a concern/suggestion/suggested speaker. Thanks!

Due to a concern about one of our rotating welcoming words, the Program Committee revised 2 of the welcoming words to make them more inclusive.

Music Committee (sub committee of the Program Committee)

Members: Nancy Wunderlin, Dan Proud, Barb Park (Choir Director)

Activities/Accomplishments/Information

Our wonderful choir continues to thrive with rehearsals and performances scheduled through the end of May. As usual, the choir will take a well-earned break over the summer. The UUA's new virtual hymnal, "Sing Out Love," is on track to formally launch with a hymn sing at General Assembly this June. We plan to subscribe to the hymnal on a one-year trial basis to explore how it fits our congregation's needs.

Choir Director Barb Park plans to attend the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries (AUUMM) annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia, at the end of July. This is a great opportunity for inspiration and connection with UU music leaders across the country. If you're interested in participating in music performances at Prairie, please don't hesitate to reach out to any member of the Music Committee.

AV and Tech Committee (sub committee of the Program Committee)

Chair: John Wunderlin

Members: Marie Andrae, Al Nettleton

Activities/Accomplishments/Information

There is not a lot to report from Tech & AV since November. We continue to adjust the instructions for Soundboard and Zoom operators. John bought a new presentation remote that has disappeared so he'll be buying another one soon. He is considering purchasing a new projector for the Annex. The current one's colors are all washed out and somewhat hard to view.

We are always looking for volunteers to help run the sound board and Zoom systems. Please let John Wunderlin know if this is something you'd be interested in.

Team RE (Religious Exploration (RE) Committee)

Chairs: Susan Herr-Hoyman and Andrea Keyser Scott

Members: Carl Wacker, Teacher representative; Matt Wise, Parent representative; Karen Deaton, Director of RE program; Marie Andrae, RE Treasurer; Renee Deschard, Program Coordination advisor; Mary Sue Reutebuch, RE consultant

Activities/Accomplishments

- Our RE program has continued to grow in members with 18 kids this last service in attendance.
- Hosted many parent support group sessions (PUUPs)
- Put on a successful rendition of the Good Samaritan parable adapted by Robin Proud and RE students
- We hired Jesse Garst for childcare.
- Students learned about a new religion each month in groups divided by age. People from that religion helped students cook a contribution for the monthly Prairie after service Potluck.
- Students raised \$98.70 for the UUSC.
- The budget remains within projected limits.

Concerns

- The new floor resurfacing project has been approved. We have a lot to do for this.

Goals

- We are still recruiting a lead teacher.
- The committee is working to foster intergenerational connections.

We thank the congregation for their continued grace and financial support to our current scholars, as they are the next generation. The committee recognizes Karen's passionate contributions to our student's education.

Social Action Committee

Chairs: Pam Gates, Chris Porter

Members: Molly Plunkett, Katie Mulligan, Paula Pachciarz, Gary Gates, and many other congregation members

Activities/Accomplishments/Information

- After we completed two years at The River on Dec. 7, they told us they were discontinuing our Saturday morning food prep due to "logistical problems." After several months of research, we have replaced The River with

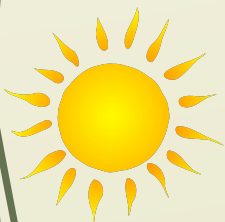
Social Action Committee, cont.

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Luke House and the Allied Drive food pantry. At Luke House, we serve lunch on the third Tuesday of every month to anyone who needs it. We are also welcome to eat lunch with the other guests, and we clean up from the meal as well. About 10 volunteers from Prairie and James Reeb will participate in this effort each time. We only started in April, because it took a while to get everything arranged, but it appears to be a good fit. On our first time there, April 22, our volunteers were Mary Sue and Tim Reutebuch, Karleen and Ralph Tyksinski, Margit Moses, Paula Pachciarz, and Pam Gates, plus three from Reeb.

- In April, we also started volunteering at the Allied Drive food pantry. Pam, Chris, and Gary did a trial run on April 9, and Prairie has now signed up for the 4th Wednesday of each month. We will provide 3-4 volunteers each time, to work from 5:45 to about 8:00 p.m. Nancy Wunderlin, Chris Porter, and Susanne Oliver are committed for May 28; we will ask for and, I'm sure, will get a fourth person.
- In November, we participated in the "Holiday Cards for People in the Dane County Jail" project. Rosemary Dorney, Judy Lazarus, Mary Mullen, Karleen Tyksinski, Pam & Gary Gates, and a number of others wrote cards. This year, so many cards got written by different congregations that each person in the jail got two cards instead of just one!
- In March, we participated in WUUSAN's UU the Vote project. WUUSAN sent us a list of potential voters, and we wrote postcards to encourage voting on April 1. Dory Lightfoot, Karleen Tyksinski, Gary & Pam Gates, Deesa Pence, and several others participated in this effort.

MOSES – Madison Organizing in Strength, Equity, and Solidarity for Criminal-Legal System Reform. Prairie is a member of this organization, having joined in 2013. Pam is the representative from Prairie. Prairie's MOSES. Activities since November 2024:



- Ralph Tyksinski, Tim and Trevor Scott, and Pam and Gary Gates attended MOSES's annual Gala on Dec. 14. This event celebrates the year's efforts and accomplishments and honors the efforts and accomplishments of three people who have rejoined the community after serving time in prison.

Social Action Committee cont.

- On March 23, MOSES Organizer James Morgan spoke at the Prairie service on the value of relationship. He was well received by the congregation.
- On April 10, six Prairie members joined 400-500 WISDOM members from across the state at Madison Action Day, a daylong event of inspiration (from, among others, the Raging Grannies!) and efforts to present our concerns to our representatives in the state legislature. The four key issues this year: Close Green Bay Correctional Institution – but build no new prison. Give all immigrants a chance to get a driver's license. Fund our schools fairly – particularly special education. Expand BadgerCare. Our minister, Mary Sue, and Ari Lo, Karen Deaton, Barb Park, Laura Long, and Gary and Pam Gates attended from Prairie, the biggest turnout ever from our congregation for this biannual event.
- On April 24, Chris Porter played the part of a parole officer in a Returning Prisoner Simulation put on by JustDane. This event, which takes place several times a year, gives people a chance to walk in the shoes of a returning prisoner – and to find out what a difficult road that is. Chris, Pam, and Katie Mulligan participated as returning prisoners in December 2023, and we urge every Prairie member to do the same. It's a truly eye-opening experience!
- MOSES continues to gather on the State Street Capitol steps on the 23rd of every month at noon to call for an end to solitary confinement in our state's prisons and jails. The U.N. has declared that solitary confinement for more than 15 days is torture. Why the 23rd? Because people in solitary spend 23 hours/day alone in a cell. The other hour may be spent elsewhere – but also alone.
- We have started putting a sentence about MOSES concerns in every Prairie Weekly News. Look for the blue and white MOSES logo toward the end of the announcements.
- It may be interesting to families that MOSES is involved in a push for Restorative Justice in Madison high schools. See Pam for more information.

Social Action Committee, cont.

- Shared Offerings: Each quarter, Prairie shares its Sunday collection with a local organization that works on eviction prevention and other homeless issues. Our sharer for the first quarter of 2025 was the Catalyst Project. For the second quarter, we are sharing with Leopold Community Assistance Network. For the last quarter of 2024, we shared with the Tenant Resource Center.

Minister's Report to Congregation

My first day as Pastoral Minister at Prairie UU was January 2, 2025. I have provided my general ministerial work over the past four months below. Committee Outreach During these four months, I have met with the following committees to learn about the needs and how I might best support their work:

- Caring Committee - Learning more about the pastoral needs of Prairie members.
- Social Action Committee - Met with committee members and attended a few events i.e., Allied Partners, WISDOM, Tuesday lunch service at Luke House.
- Ad hoc Committee - Assisting in leadership with procedures and education surrounding "right relations" within the use of Prairie Views.
- Program Committee - Offering support and leadership with presentations including music, and Stories for All Ages.
- Committee on Ministry - Creating an open conversation regarding my needs within the role of Pastoral Minister and receiving support from this committee
- Membership Committee - Helping to create welcoming information surrounding Unitarian Universalist history and beliefs. I was present at the welcoming session for new members.

Pastoral Counseling: I am currently meeting with individuals and couples for pastoral care on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and offering evening appointments as well.



Minister's Report to Congregation, cont.

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Presentations from January through April 2025

- January - "Still Climbing the Justice Mountain, Lessons not yet Learned from MLK"
- February - "Exploring Love Languages"
- March - "Healing Communities through Kinship"
- April - "Lullabies: The Wisdom and Science of Soothing," and "Celebrating the 3 R's: Rebirth, Renewal, and Resilience"
- *November 2024 (conclusion to the interview process) - "Active Hope a Post Election Journey"

Attending for General Outreach:

- Thursday Potluck Dinners
- WOW breakfast meeting
- Emotional Intelligence Book Group Discussion
- Met with the PUPPS group to discuss conflict resolution
- *I have not yet attended INTERWEAVE but plan to attend this summer

It has been my pleasure and honor to be the new part-time Pastoral Minister at Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. I am finding my way and hope to continue to be of service to this unique and beautiful community.

