

Prairie Fire

August 2013

Prairie Calendar

(descriptions of programs below)



Sat. August 3rd 9-11am - **WOW@Prairie**

6:30pm - **Humanist Union (note time & place change)**

Sun. August 4th 10am Service: "**How Clean Energy Can Create a Brighter Future for Wisconsin**" **Shahla Werner**

5:30pm **Men's Group**

Sun. August 11th 10am Service: "**Foreign Aide Best Practices**" **Gary Peterson**

Mon. August 12th 6:15 **Spanish Speakers Club (note time change)**

Sun. August 18th 10am Service: "**It's Easier Than You Think**" **Sandra Ingham**
Gay Pride Parade -Prairie invited to join Reeb & 1st

Sun. August 25th 10am Service: "**SERRV in Bangladesh**"

11:30am **Book Club**

Tues. August 27th 1:30pm **Elders and Friends**

WOW @Prairie: Women of Wonder meets every 1st Saturday of the month 9-11am at Prairie. Bring a breakfast/brunch dish to share. Contact: Anne Urbanski 221-4053 anne53714@gmail.com

Humanist Union: The Japanese film "Departures" will be shown Saturday, Aug. 3, 6:30pm (**Please note time & place change**) at the home of Barb & Bob Park, 5610 Hammersley Rd. This film is highly recommended by our former minister Jane Esbensen. It won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2009. Storyline: An unemployed cellist discovers an alternative meaning for 'departures'. We won't have a potluck this month, but feel free to bring snack food to share. Movie starts at 7. All who are interested in issues surrounding death and dying are encouraged to attend. Contact: Bob Park 273-8775 humanistunion@gmail.com

"How Clean Energy Can Create a Brighter Future for Wisconsin": Sierra Club Director Shahla Werner will discuss

how individuals can reduce the threat of climate change to current and future generations, foster job creation, improve public health, AND save money on energy bills. Pushing decision-makers to support better energy policies in WI and taking charge of our own energy use with Sierra Club's new solar homes partnership and Focus On Energy homeowner incentives will reduce the amount of energy we waste. Shahla Werner has been the Director of the Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter in WI since 2008. She earned her MS and PhD in entomology at the UW- Madison.

Men's Group: The Men's Group meets the 1st Sunday of the month at Prairie. Bring a dish to pass. Contact: Dan Proud derrproud@att.net

"Foreign Aide Best Practices" Gary Peterson: Through his extensive experiences with Rotary International, our own Gary Peterson, will share his conclusions on the most effective ways to help developing nations.

Spanish Speakers Club: Meeting at Audrey Shomos home, 134 Grove St., Evansville.
(Note earlier time: 6:15pm)
Contact: Rosemary Dorney 238-4382

"It's Easier Than You Think" Sandra Ingham: Rev. Sandy will take a playful look at the "Buddhist Path to Happiness", with help from some Buddhist friends, Sylvia Boorstein and Joanna Macy, among others. We will consider the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path or the Eightfold Dot, as Boorstein calls it. And, we will contemplate these Buddhist teachings in plain language and with periods of meditation -- don't worry, short meditations! See you then!

Gay Pride Parade - Details not available at this time.
<http://www.wisconsinapitolpride.org/>

"SERRV in Bangladesh": A lot of people, while they support and purchase SERRV products, don't understand that aspect of SERRV is only half of their business. They are committed to sponsoring development projects around the world, which help grow their partners' capabilities and strengthen their businesses. One such project is in Bangladesh. Given the recent Rena Plaza factory collapse tragedy where 1100 garment workers were killed instantly, SERRV's Bangladesh project could be one answer to remedy this problem.

Book Club: The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, by Michelle Alexander. This is the UUA's Common Read for 2012-2013. You may have heard how the percentage of black and brown prisoners is way above their proportion in the population. Does this mean people of darker colors are more prone to crime? You'll learn why the percentages are so high and you will be angry. The WISDOM/MOSES group that is working to promote alternatives to prison also suggests this book. Suggested by Molly Plunkett and

Mary Mullen. Contact: Mary Mullen: 298-0843; mmullen@chorus.net

Elders and Friends: Do come to the August Elders meeting on Tuesday, August 27th at 1:30, where we will have an especially pertinent discussion: "U.S. Surveillance: Does this threaten our civil liberties?" Bring a snack to share if you wish. We Elders meet once a month to talk, and to share warmth with you. Held at Oakwood Village, Nakoma Room...on Mineral Point Rd. Contact: Nancy Garst: 230-3392 or Rosemary Dorney: 238-4382

...and Now a Word from the Rev.

The biggest challenge people encounter when trying to build sustaining, viable, efficient, exciting, highly functioning communities is communication. Human beings are just not very good at communicating with each other. Most of us could use a course in Communications 101, myself included.

During the past several weeks, I have been reminded several times of the importance of good communication in building relationships with each other and in maintaining a healthy organization. I have encountered this challenge in every congregation I have been part of, either as a lay person or as a minister. The specifics are not important.

What is important is that we: train ourselves to really, truly, deeply listen to each other, without blaming or judging; be as honest with each other as possible; develop "thick skins" so we don't take feedback to mean we are unworthy or unlikable; hear constructive criticism without getting defensive; accept compliments graciously; applaud those who tell the truth as they see it; acknowledge mistakes; and forgive ourselves and others. Only then will we be able to move on, always remembering the greater, common good. For us at Prairie the common good is

working towards an even stronger organization and beloved community. The greater good is remembering that we are entrusted with an amazing, rich tradition and our job is to cherish, celebrate and strengthen that tradition, then hand it off to succeeding generations.

Maybe you can spend August practicing all of the above. This is not easy "stuff". I have been intentionally working on it for almost 40 years and I still struggle mightily!

But, it's worth it -- GOOD LUCK!
=Rev. Sandy

The President's Corner

By now, you have probably gotten a letter from the Finance Committee summarizing all of your financial contributions to Prairie in the last year. These information filled personal documents represent untold hours of work, especially on the part of Kathy Converse, Patty Stockdale and Al Nettleton. There has been so much financial activity during the past year. It has included the 6 month fiscal year ending December 31st, the pledges for the current year, the additional pledges for this year, the Service Auction, the Retreat and everyone's generous gift to purchase "the house next door" (name still needed). To complicate things, there were problems with the automatic withdrawals of members who give regularly through ACH. Kathy and Patty untangled this web of giving and have provided each of us a clear and easy to read chart of what was given to what as well as what is to come. I cannot thank them enough for their gift of time, persistence and skill. It is working with such wonderful people that makes being President of Prairie so gratifying.

There are many tasks yet to come and all of us can find a role to take. Dirk Herr-Hoyman is still recruiting helpers for renovation of the house. The various Prairie committees plan to host a "Committee Fair" sometime in September. We hope to make

this a fun event for everyone and there is no doubt in my mind that you will find something through one or more of these committees that piques your interest and matches your skills. Not all jobs require a large time commitment. Some are one time things (like bringing soup or helping with the auction), some are easy but repetitive (like making coffee or bringing flowers), and some require a deeper level of commitment and creativity like teach in the RE Program or being a member of the Program Committee. All are enjoyable if you find the right fit, so think about it and be sure to put the Committee Fair on your calendar when the date is announced.
-Barb Park

Out and About with the Prairie Community

Pat Watkins, a long time Prairie member, has been diagnosed with a metastasizing lung cancer. Despite radiation therapy, which has left her fatigued, Pat retains her indefatigable spirit and sanguine perspectives. She's at home cleaning up her business and personal papers. Fortunately, Pat's daughter Leslie works nearby and is able to attend her regularly. Pat welcomes phone calls and cards, but requests you schedule visits in advance.

Don't know Pat? Here is a bit of her history with Prairie. Pat has contributed much to the life of Prairie Society over the years. She has brought unique perspectives to our congregation in the many programs she has presented and thoughtful observations on the programs of others. She served many terms on the Executive Board as Secretary and served on or was chair of many standing committees, most notably as long-standing chair of the Denominational Affairs Committee. She has been our champion of larger Unitarian Universalist denominational perspectives and fought to assure we contributed to and were informed of them. She has supported our participation and

training in Midwest Regional conferences and business affairs. Pat has been a consistent generator of ideas for improvements and fund-raising including organizing and enacting innumerable bus trips for arts and cultural enhancement. She is an ever-vigilant watchdog of our by-laws and stickler for their use and application.

Yet Pat has never been content to let us rest on our laurels and has continued to push us to innovate and improve. Before Prairie had paid staff, Pat volunteered to be Prairie's first Administrator and thus proved its value to the Society. Pat has been very active in many other community organizations, but those of us who enjoy a vibrant religious society owe much to her efforts. Thank you Pat, we wish you well and hope you are able to return to Prairie on a Sunday soon.

Gary Gates recently had knee replacement surgery [partial]. His recovery is proceeding rapidly but the doctor says it could be 3 to 6 months before he feels the full benefit [or finds out that partial wasn't enough]. Gary seems convinced that 3 to 6 weeks will be enough to be fully active. He doesn't seem to understand the inconsistency of having full confidence in his doctor to do the surgery but not wanting to listen to the doctor about how long recovery will take. You go, Gary!

Barb Park had abdominal surgery July 19th, and stayed at the hospital most of Saturday. She's recovering, getting better daily, but still can't sit comfortably. Bob is taking good care of her! She would love to have visits, but doesn't need anything else. Thanks to everyone who sent her cards!

Rev Sandy has begun her move to an apartment of her own. It will take til Sept. to complete the move. She thanks all who have helped so far. Sandy will also be taking some study time from Aug. 4th-14th. She will still be available via email or phone, but not in person.

A Chatauqua Summer

I wanted to share a little about my favorite place to vacation – a place that may appeal to Prairie folks. For the last five years I have been going for a week to Chautauqua Institution, a kind of summer camp, summer school, historic town on a large lake in southwestern New York State. It is a place where I vacationed every summer in the 1950s.

Chautauqua was started in the late 1870s as the first summer school, a kind of conference and meeting spot for Sunday school teachers interested in music, art and books. This is the origin of the Chautauqua movement, a traveling lecture series. A cultural mecca for well over a century, Chautauqua is an extraordinary place, steeped in history and Victorian architecture, a utopian spot where people come to learn, study, perform, play, all within the institutional gates of the community. Gate fees are charged which enable visitors to attend programs and concerts at no cost. It is not an inexpensive spot, just a thoroughly engaging, stimulating one – and very beautiful.

Each week there is a theme to the programs presented in two large open amphitheatres. The recent week I was there the theme was “Markets and Morals and the Social Contract,” a provocative subject with excellent speakers in morning and afternoon sessions. Every evening there was a concert. I took a course in the poetry of Rumi each noon. Families enjoy a range of recreational and learning activities; kids are everywhere. I loved it then and still do.

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With a strong commitment to religion, the various denominations and faiths have houses there where you can stay; there are also other accommodations available. The UU House was re-instated in 2009 after a long absence and offers a charming house with about a half-dozen rooms (and great demand). The house is part of the UU Fellowship there that holds services and offers a series of lectures on ethical topics.

If you are interested in architecture, spirituality, and utopian communities, this is a glorious spot, a gem. Have a look: www.ciweb.org.
-Anne Lundin

Prairie News

Prairie Expansion @ 2006 Whenona

The work on expanding our space into the house next door took off in July. There were work parties several times each week with carpet and fence removal being the most notable. Already the new space is being utilized, as storage for Housing and Property has been shifted from Prairie's furnace room to the basement of 2006.

Thanks to the many helping hands, which have already participated!

Plans are being made for renovations with the help of our architect Todd Barnett of Barnett Architecture. Todd is looking into changes for a 1st floor accessible bath, removing walls to enlarge the living room, combining 2 bedrooms for RE space, and adding a parking lot on the Crawford side of

our property. Two offices are slated for the 2nd floor on the south side, which faces our main building. Soon it will be time to pick materials and colors for flooring, walls etc. Let me know if you are interested in working on these choices.

The work parties will continue through August, though the pace may slow down due to vacations. Among the tasks to get done are: moving interior doors, cleaning walls and floors, painting window sash, removing bushes and other landscaping. The next big work item that can involve many hands is painting, as we will be repainting the entire inside. I don't have a time yet for the painting, but I am hoping to fit it in just before the start of the school year.



Before

Some of you have asked about contributing items. At this time, we are not ready to take anything (need to keep the space clear), but we can look at potential contributions. Talk with either myself, or Al Nettleton, if you have items to donate. No, we don't have an official list of what we need yet. Among the items already contributed are chairs, wood flooring, and an outdoor playset.



After

Please consider how you can participate in the growth of Prairie and let me know how you'd like to fit in!
- Dirk Herr-Hoyman

Who's New at Prairie



Kent Wenger

I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Pittsburgh and Green Bay. While living in Pittsburgh my family attended a Mennonite church (Mennonite is the religious background on both sides of my family), but when we moved to Green Bay there were no Mennonite churches in the area, and our churchgoing pretty much stopped at that point. I guess you could say that I found my way to Prairie because I'm looking for community without the dogma that made no sense to me.

I came to Madison in 1983 to attend the UW (after also attending UW-Green Bay and Northwestern), and eventually ended up getting a degree in computer sciences. I currently do programming on several research projects at the department of computer sciences at the UW. My wife Sue does data collection and analysis for the cardiac surgery department at UW Hospital (she has both a nursing degree and an art degree from UW).

When I'm not working, I like to bicycle and travel (combined, if possible) and play with

our three-year-old miniature schnauzer Theo. I'm also trying to build a small model railroad in whatever time I have left over after that.

RE Circle of Friends

I'm back! I had a nice three week study break and learned a lot about our Unitarian and Universalist history. The more I learn about the struggles of those fighting for our religious freedom the prouder I become of my chosen faith. If you're also interested in learning more you're welcome to stop by my office to borrow books. Prairie UU Society has a great library and I was quite surprised by the books I found on its shelves; books on sermons by great Unitarian leaders as well as writings by our Universalist forefathers.



Now that I'm back I'm putting the finishing touches on brochures, forms and curricula. Registration forms, the Fall calendar and our 2013-14 brochure are all out on the visitor's table and online for your viewing. I'll be mailing out an information package with everything inside in the next week or two. If you would prefer to download this information off our website please let me know.

Coming up is our annual Summer Splash Pool Party. This year it will be on Sunday, August 25th at 2 pm. We'll meet once again at Goodman Aquatic Center in Verona. Fliers are posted online and on the RE bulletin board (by the coffee and tea) with

more information and directions. This is a fun time for Prairie members and friends of all ages to swim, play and soak up the sun.

Children's religious education will begin Sunday, September 8th. This day is also our annual Water Ceremony. I hope you have been collecting water from all the special places you've been this summer. I have mine on a shelf in my office. If you're afraid you're going to forget your water you can place your bottle next to mine on my shelf. Just label it with your name and I'll make sure it's ready to go that morning.

On that day children will be upstairs for the majority of the ceremony. Towards the end of the service they'll be sung downstairs to have a short children's chapel and then off to their class to meet their new teachers and classmates and get a brief introduction to the year ahead. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please feel free to see me or anyone on the Religious Education Committee: Susan Herr-Hoyman (chair) Karen Deaton, Rachel Long, Robin Proud and our minister, Rev. Sandy Ingham.

Keep collecting your water for the water ceremony and I'll be seeing you on Sunday
-Rebecca Malke, DRE

Visit Prairie's website (see below) for further information



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<http://www.uuprairie.org>**

Flights of Imagination

Wellspring

Come into the cave
deeper, deeper
into the earth's heart.
Touch the water that curls along the walls.
All that we are was ever here,
as the earth beats around us
as even the breath stills
within the silent pulse of night.
Sing.
Sing.
But do not
make a sound.

- by Sky

I'm Sky. I play with words and worlds
at www.storyspirals.com. Writing is power.