

Prairie Fire

December 2013

Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)



- Sun. Dec 1 10 am Service: "Mentoring Positives" - Will Green
5:30 pm Men's Group
- Sat. Dec 7 9-11 am WOW@Prairie
- Sun. Dec 8 9:30 am Religious Education Nifty Gifty
10 am Service: "Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia in Wisconsin" - Paul Rusk
11:30 am Prairie Book Club
- Mon. Dec 9 6:30 pm Spanish Speakers Potluck
- Sun. Dec 15 10 am Service: Symbol Tree Service
- Sat. Dec 21 5-9 pm HumanLight Holiday Party
- Sun. Dec 22 10 am Service: RE play: "Following Yonder Star"
- Sun. Dec 29 10 am Service: "Letter to My Grandchildren" - Sandra Ingham
- Tues. Dec 31 3-6 pm Prairie Elders (Note Time & Place Change)

"Mentoring Positives": One approach to meeting the MOSES 11 by 15 goal is to keep our children from interacting with our criminal justice system. Will Green, from "Mentoring Positives" (<http://mentoringpositives.org/>) will tell us about his work. "Mentoring Positives" is committed to providing positive mentoring relationships to help youth and young adults discover their gifts and talents, learn new skills, and experience successes through social, psychological, and emotional development that will prepare them for adulthood.

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

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 anneu53714@gmail.com

RE Nifty Gifty is a Prairie tradition that has been going on for many years. It's a chance for children and youth to make gifts that they can give to family and friends, teachers or classmates during the winter holidays.

"Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia in Wisconsin": Learn about the warning signs as well as brain health tips. Learn what is happening here locally and find out ways to get involved. Presented by Paul Rusk, Director, Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin.

Spanish Speakers Potluck will be at the home of Ema Pachon, 1459 E. Main St. #205. Bill Shaffer will be visiting from the Peace Corps and would like to see everyone. Call Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382 for more information or to arrange a ride.

Prairie Book Club: First half of The Chocolate Wars: The 150-Year Rivalry Between the World's Greatest Chocolate Makers by Deborah Cadbury. Surprisingly, "the major English firms were all Quaker family enterprises, and their business aims were infused with religious idealism." Was that the cause of their defeat in competing against American companies? The author is a descendent of the Cadbury dynasty and is a best selling author and a TV producer for the BBC. Available: Madison Public Library and in electronic format. Suggested by Deesa Pence.

The Symbol Tree is a Prairie annual tradition. Prairie members and friends are asked to bring something to decorate our Holiday Tree that symbolizes the past year for them. During the service, members and friends take turns explaining the meaning of their symbol ornament. The ornament can be anything from a photo, receipt, grade card, trinket, anything that will fit on a tree.

HumanLight Holiday Party at Prairie is sponsored by the Humanist Union for the December holidays. Everyone at Prairie is invited, as well as humanists and their friends from throughout the greater Madison area. The festivities are sure to include food and music, and maybe dancing and other activities. Barb and Bob Park are looking for several more singers to form a small HumanLight Choir, to practice and perform a number or two. We will also have group singing that everyone has a chance to join in. Details will be posted on the Humanist Union events page at <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/events.htm>.

"Following Yonder Star": We don't consider ourselves magi, but we can all relate to the feeling of setting out on a journey in life, not knowing exactly where we are going or how it will turn out. Robin Proud and the 4th - 8th graders will present a play about the three wise men - and their wives! The congregation will participate by singing carols between scenes. Our younger classes will join us for a final tableau - feel free to bring your cameras!

"Letter to My Grandchildren": The title of these reflections should perhaps be "Letter to the Next Generations". Whether or not you have grandchildren or children is irrelevant. Our job as adults is to pass along a livable world to the generations coming after us. I still believe that part of our job is to try to make the world a better place, but sometimes that seems increasingly difficult. How do we sustain hope in humanity, let alone preserve the concept of hope for those who will need it next? What else should we be preserving and passing along besides hope? The end of an old year seems like a good time to contemplate where we might go in the new one. Hope to see you on this last Sunday in December!

Prairie Elders will meet in December after all. We have a quote. Who said it, what does it mean, do you agree? Discuss. **Note: our usual room isn't available. Instead, we'll be in the Tower Party Room.** Check at usual desk for directions. If you can, bring a snack and your own cup. All seniors welcome! Call Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382 for directions, parking info, etc.

Prairie News

Guests at Your Table Reminder: Bring "Guest at Your Table" boxes on December 15th to put under the Symbol Tree. If you forget, bring them back to Prairie anytime between now & the end of January.

Artist of the Month: Tony Prudlo

If you've attended a Sunday service at Prairie in the last few years, you've probably noticed various works of original art decorating the walls at the front of the room, in particular behind the lectern and the piano. Every bit of art displayed there was produced by Prairie members or friends. The art works are rotated approximately once a month, though not necessarily at the start of the month.

Our October - November artist was Tony Prudlo. Tony and his wife, Terri, spend the warmer months of the year in Madison and the cooler months in Montgomery, Alabama. Photography has been one of Tony's hobbies for many years, and the large photographs now hanging in the meeting room are his work. Tony has been taking photos of flowers for many years. The largest photo, of a "poppy field", depicts roadside plantings along the bypass highway in Montgomery; the photo of a single poppy was enlarged from that bigger picture. The other photos were taken in the UW Arboretum. According to Terri, Tony takes the pictures, she edits them, and they make cards and a yearly calendar from them. ~ Anne Urbanski

Spanish Speakers Club: Every month I send a postcard to each of our current attendees to remind them of our upcoming monthly meeting. Since we don't always meet on a fixed day of the month, this really helps our attendance. I'm happy to absorb the cost of doing this, but it's also fun to get a variety of cards rather than all of the capitol (for example). If any of you have unused postcards lying around that you don't need, we'd greatly appreciate having them. If you give them to Barb Park, she'll get them to me, and if you enjoy speaking even a little Spanish, come see us sometime! ¡Muchisimas gracias! Rosemary (Rosamaria) Dorney

Who's New @ Prairie



Evan Creed, Johanna Hatch and Liam

We moved to Verona in 2008 from Washington, DC, where we were both graduate students,

when Evan accepted a position at Epic. In 2009, we bought a house and our son Liam was born. Evan still works at Epic, and received his sabbatical this year. Johanna works as a doula with Beautiful Birth Doula Service, and is also a nursing student at Herzing University. She also volunteers as a La Leche League Leader. Liam loves trains, Legos, swim class, and going to the library. Our family also includes two dogs, an almost seventeen-year-old dachshund named Aloysius and a much younger beagle mix named Lucy.

We started attending Prairie at the beginning of the summer, looking for a community that would be welcoming to the diverse religious views we hold in our small family, and a friendly place for Liam to have a positive experience with religious and ethical education. What started as a visit quickly became a weekly habit when Liam started asking to go to "family church," as he nicknamed Prairie. Liam loves RE, and Johanna is enjoying co-teaching the pre-K class this year. We are very happy to have found a community to call our own at Prairie!

...and Now a Word from the Rev.

At the Fall Parish Meeting on November 24th, I mentioned that there are several kinds of growth. When talking about what we want to happen at Prairie, we tend to mean growth in terms of numbers. I think we also need to consider three other kinds of growth: growth in our individual spiritual journeys; growth in our interpersonal interactions with each other right here at Prairie; and growth in our social justice work outside of the specific Prairie community. As 2013 draws to an end, I ask you these questions. Are you growing by being a part of Prairie? What will you do in the new year to grow even more?

Just as there are many ways to grow, there are many impediments that stand in the way of growth. Sometimes we are afraid of growth because we are afraid of change, perhaps, or because it takes effort and energy to stretch ourselves. Sometimes there just aren't enough hours in the day to allow us to go beyond our daily routines. Sometimes we think we don't need to grow anymore. We all have our own baggage and demons that keep us from growing.

December is a good time to take a hard look at whatever is standing in our way. I say baggage and demons be gone, or at least put aside for the New Year so that we can better see what is really important to us and act from that base, rather than from a fearful one. In other words, let grace enter into your daily lives. What is grace, you might ask? There may be a Sunday morning in 2014 when we explore this topic.

I will be away from November 25 until December 17. I will check email and voice mail messages as often as possible, except between November 30 and December 6, when I will not have access to either a computer or a cell phone. HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL OF YOU!
~ Rev. Sandy

Out and About with the Prairie Community

The Road Home: "Sleeping in a Strange Bed" ~ Paula Pachciarz

Every seven days, a family participating in "The Road Home" packs up its belongings, puts away its assigned beds, cleans up its assigned room, and moves to another room in another church with other beds.

The families chosen for "The Road Home" program do not waste the opportunities given them. They have a high rate of success in finding jobs and affordable housing, using the services provided by The Road Home. Part of that service is providing a safe place to stay while they're in the program. This is how Prairie helps. We are a buddy church to Midvale Lutheran, which takes its turn hosting the families three to four times a year.

The volunteer job that is hardest to fill and which I usually do is being an overnight host. I arrive at 7 pm, check in with the coordinator, and interact with the families before bedtime. This means that often I play or read with the kids or chat with the parents and the other overnight host. Since families are in their rooms by 9 and quiet time begins at 10, I am able to go to sleep at my usual bedtime. I leave shortly after 6 a.m., when the breakfast host arrives.

There are good reasons why people don't volunteer for this slot. Many have work schedules that conflict. Many have families they need to be with during those hours. Many have trouble sleeping in a strange bed or don't want the responsibility. But if this is something you think you are able to do, please consider signing up the next time Prairie is called on to be a buddy to Midvale Lutheran and the families. The volunteer coordinator of that church has a very hard time finding overnight volunteers and often stays over 2 or 3 nights, herself.

Erin Bosch is Prairie's coordinator for The Road Home volunteers. Please contact Erin or me if you would like more information about being an overnight host. Paula Pachiarz pjpchz@gmail.com or Erin Bosch hillfarms2002@yahoo.com

Prairie Twins!



Jocelyn Cooper & Orange Schroeder

Melinda Gustafson Gervasi shared the following news: After many years of writing, editing and revisions, I released a small book on November 1st. *Middle Class Philanthropist: How Anyone Can Leave a Legacy* is designed to educate and inspire the average person to leave an end-of-life gift, and challenge those who work in nonprofit development to re-examine who they consider to be a philanthropist. More about the book is posted at www.purpleowlpress.com
Congratulations, Melinda!

Holiday Traditions

Gustafson Gervasi Family Tradition ~ shared by Melinda Gustafson

In our house we make an effort to celebrate the winter solstice. Not only is it the longest night of the year, and marks the return of the sun with movement toward longer days - it was the day we got engaged. In our house we like to take the afternoon off from work and get outside. Sledding is a favorite if there is enough snow. And snow or no snow, we scatter bird seed in Garner Park by our house...making life a bit easier for our "all year birds". We cap the day off by baking cinnamon moon cookies, a family recipe from my Swedish relatives.

Double Party on Christmas Eve ~ shared by Ron Frye

In my family, there have been several weddings on December 24th at 3 p.m. Consequently we have stopped the Christmas festivities to have coffee or something stronger mid-afternoon to celebrate wedding anniversaries. My maternal grandparents plus my mother and step dad are amongst those recognized. Stories are told and lives together are recognized. These folks represent the Swedish side of the family and the "something stronger" can be glögg, sort of a warm, Swedish sangria. My favorite version uses aquavit for the liquor, but wine and brandy are also used. Think mulled wine and two parties on one day but strong drink in moderation.

There is not much visible left of my Swedish roots. Grandma and Grandpa both spoke Swedish and belonged to Swedish groups, but the language did not get passed along very well. Swedish relatives have come to visit and stay but there amidst Swedish Christmas decorations, spritz, meatballs, rye bread and rice pudding are the visible connections I have to Mom's side of the family, along with the blue eyes, light hair and square heads.

We are making our holiday visit over Thanksgiving to that side of the family. Likely I will call Mom about 3 p.m. Christmas eve. That's not the only time for a warm cup of glögg. Perhaps we will get the chance to share some with you and double the party again?

Winged Words

GIFTS

by Gary Gates

I have been very blessed
By friends and family I feel caressed
Things I have in surfeit
For food and clothes I do not fret

No presents do I need
So with you I plead
If presents you want to give
Let another child live

No gifts do I want
Except to know one less child is gaunt
Give them clean air and water
A place fit for an otter

A world to explore
That is not full of gore

If you give these gifts to me
I will accept them thankfully
And if such gifts are not your style
Save your money and give a smile

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



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