

# Prairie Fire



**December 2015**

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## Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

<b>Fri</b>	<b>Dec 4</b>	5:00 p.m. <b>Board Game Night</b>
<b>Sat</b>	<b>Dec 5</b>	<b>Men's Shelter Breakfast</b>
<b>Sat</b>	<b>Dec 5</b>	<b>Prairie WOW</b> meets
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 6</b>	8:45 a.m. <b>Choir rehearsal</b> meets in the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 6</b>	10:00 a.m. <b>The Ethics of Assistance</b> by Matt Tedesco
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 6</b>	11:45 a.m. <b>FFRF Convention Review/Holiday Discussion.</b> Humanist Union will begin with a potluck lunch. Program from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 6</b>	5:30-7:00 p.m. <b>Men's Group</b> meets. Potluck followed by the meeting
<b>Sat</b>	<b>Dec 12</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Build Your Own Theology</b>
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 13</b>	8:45 a.m. <b>Choir rehearsal</b> meets in the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 13</b>	10:00 a.m. <b>Never Forget—Newtown</b> —This service will occur the day before the 3rd anniversary of the tragic Sandy Hook shooting
<b>Mon</b>	<b>Dec 14</b>	6:00 p.m. <b>Finance Committee</b> meets
<b>Mon</b>	<b>Dec 14</b>	7:00 p.m. <b>Program Committee</b> meets
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 20</b>	8:45 a.m. <b>Choir rehearsal</b> meets in the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 20</b>	10:00 a.m. <b>The Symbol Tree</b> —This is a prairie tradition. After the children Walk through the darkened meeting room in the Santa Lucia Procession, members will decorate our yule tree with items that are symbolic of events from the past year
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 20</b>	11:30 a.m. <b>Soup Sunday</b>
<b>Mon</b>	<b>Dec 21</b>	<b>Spanish Speakers</b>
<b>Tues</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	1:30 p.m.— <b>Prairie Elders</b> meet at the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 27</b>	<b>No Choir Practice</b>
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Dec 27</b>	10:00 a.m. <b>The Seven Principles as New Years Resolutions</b> —The Program Committee has resolved to do a series of programs on The Seven Principles next year. This will be the kickoff of the series

**Sun Jan 3**      **All Sing Sunday**—This will be an all music service of your requests for your favorite hymns/songs. What a great way to start the new year with a song!

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December 6—The Prairie community is committed to assisting those in need, and as we enter yet another holiday season, we sometimes see this season as a time to do more for others. This assistance takes many forms: sometimes it is through financial aid, and sometimes it is through giving our time, energy, and efforts. But how should we understand the moral status of assistance? When we give of ourselves, are we going beyond the call of duty, or merely doing what morality requires of us? How demanding is morality's call to assistance? In this talk, Matt will present a particularly famous argument offered by Peter Singer on the ethics of assistance, as a springboard into a conversation about how to think about morality and giving.

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December 6—The Humanist Union will meet starting at 11:45 with a potluck lunch. This month's discussion will be led by Susan Hagstrom, who will report on the Freedom From Religion Foundation's 38th Annual National Convention. This talk will be illustrated with photos by Ingrid Laas, the convention photographer. There should also be time to discuss likes and dislikes about the Christmas holiday.

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December 20—Members will decorate our yule tree with items such as a photo of a new family member by birth, marriage or adoption (even the furry kind of adoption). It could be a souvenir of a trip. Maybe retirement papers, a nail from a remodeling project, or a change of address form to symbolize a move. Anything that symbolizes a milestone from the past year that will fit on the tree.

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December 22—Prairie Elders will be discussing the following: How do those with non-Christian, atheist or Humanist beliefs feel at this time of year. Are your buttons being pushed?

If you are over 65 or thereabouts, please join the Elders three days before Christmas for a stimulating social time and discussion. For more information, contact Al Nettleton or Penny Eiler. The first meeting in the new year will be January 26.

## **Musings from the Minister—Sandra Ingham**

Here are excerpts from the Minister's Report that I gave at the Fall Parish Meeting on November 22nd.

The weekend of November 13-15 was a magical weekend at Prairie. Many wonderful, beautiful events occurred. It began with the Renaissance Dinner on Friday evening. This dinner was an "Auction Item" -- that is, people could bid on it during our annual auction. (NOTE: coming up again in the Spring!!) The event would not have happened without the enthusiastic participation of many of our young people. I am very sorry that I missed it; I hope that it -- or something very much like it -- will be repeated next year.

On Saturday morning of that weekend, the Membership Committee held an "Orientation to Prairie" get together for folks wanting to know more about Unitarian Universalism, in general, or our Prairie community, in particular, or both. As always, I was energized and motivated by the discussion and by getting to know new folks and by listening to the stories of Prairie people who have been part of this Fellowship for awhile.

One of the highlights of that weekend was the most amazing Thanksgiving Dinner for the Elders on Saturday afternoon. The food was fabulous! And, the sharing by the 80-and-90-year-olds of moments in their lives that were turning points was spectacular. The sense of community and camaraderie was palpable. You could almost reach out and touch it.

As if all that weren't enough, there was another huge highlight of the weekend -- the service on Sunday, the 15th, marking the national Transgender Day of Remembrance. This service was intense, funny, sad, joyful, thoughtful. There was even more going on over the weekend -- for example, exciting classes were taking place "downstairs" on Sunday morning, just part of the usual outstanding religious education program that Prairie offers its young people.

All of this added up to a very special, magical weekend -- which seemed to me to perfectly illustrate what a church (in the best sense of what that word means to Unitarian Universalists) is all about -- exactly what a faith community should look like and should be doing.

As I begin my fourth year with you, I expect to get to know you even better, both as individuals and as members of this larger Prairie community. I expect you to take a lot of interest in what your Board does for you and what committees we have and what the purposes and responsibilities of those committees are. I expect us to continue to be passionate about what it means to be freethinkers. And, I expect you to tell me what you expect from me and from Prairie in general in the coming months.

During this season of Thanksgiving, I want to thank all of the many people in this congregation without whom I could not do my job. There are too many of you to name individually in this space right now -- hopefully, you know who you are! Keep up the great work.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS... Rev. Sandy

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## **From Aileen Nettleton**

### **"Honoring Choices" Advance Directives Now Online**

"Honoring Choices" was introduced to participants of the Final Choices workshops last fall as a pilot for Advance Care Planning and directives with one of the developers, Jim Jaeger. The form and information is now ready for general public use and is online. The Caring Committee has used this with several Prairie members, who found it very helpful in having conversations and making plans for end-of-life health care planning. We encourage everyone to plan for your own care and discuss your plans with your family and health care representative. [https://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/\\_WMS/professionalism/hcw/2015/pdf/HCW\\_AD\\_January\\_2014\\_updated.pdf](https://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/_WMS/professionalism/hcw/2015/pdf/HCW_AD_January_2014_updated.pdf).

The excellent booklet, Final Choices, First Unitarian Society, presents other aspects of planning for end of life, as well, from financial and estate planning to planning your own memorial service and is also online. We recommend printing it up and getting your plans in place for your own peace of mind and for assisting your family. <http://www.fusmadison.org/media/FinalChoices2011.pdf>

Feel free to contact your Caring Committee contact person, minister Sandy Ingham or committee chair Aileen Nettleton if you would like to “begin the conversation” with one of us.

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## **Circle of Friends—Holly Tellander, Dir. Religious Education**

### **NEW DRE EMAIL**

Please update your email contacts to reflect a change in the Prairie DRE email. Previously I have used my personal email address, but a new one has been created. The new address is [prairie\\_uu\\_dre@outlook.com](mailto:prairie_uu_dre@outlook.com)

### **RE GOOGLE CALENDAR**

To meet the changing technological needs of our program I have created a Google Calendar for our families and anyone else interested in keeping updated with our downstairs activities. The calendar is public. If you already use Google Calendar you can just add the RE Calendar to your current calendars, you can also just view the calendar in your browser if you prefer. If you'd like more information on how to access the calendar, please contact Holly Tellander at the new email address: [prairie\\_uu\\_dre@outlook.com](mailto:prairie_uu_dre@outlook.com)

### **MONTHLY THEMES**

December's theme is Service. RE students will visit a retirement community on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> to read holiday stories together and share a special gift. Many people spend the holiday season cold, hungry and lonely. How can we as UUs live out our dedication to our first principle “Everyone is Important” – not only during this season but throughout the year? This will be the topic of conversations downstairs, and hopefully at home, this month.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- **Nifty Gifty** – Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> will be our annual gift making extravaganza! Please plant to show up at least 15 minutes early to get started. No need to pre-register! Just show up on that day ready to be creative. Lists of needed items have gone out, please contact Holly Tellander if you didn't receive one. We are still looking for donations of snacks and cider, as well as volunteers to help with the crafting!
- **Symbol Tree & Santa Lucia** – Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup> will be our annual symbol tree service. Bring items that are representative of something meaningful to you from the passing year, share your memories and hang your item on the tree. You won't want to miss this sweet Prairie tradition.

There will NOT be an extended day RE program on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of December. Look for this popular program to resume on January 24<sup>th</sup>!

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION – YOU DID IT!**

November's service project benefiting DAIS (Domestic Abuse Intervention Services) and the MOM Network (Middleton Outreach Ministry) was a HUGE success! Thanks to Prairie students and families as well as our larger congregation for all of your amazing effort to donate items. We have truly made a difference in the lives of many this month.

Our next social justice project will be working with the UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee) to collect money for the Guest at Your Table Program. More information coming soon!

### **ITEMS WANTED**

We are still looking for donations of warm mittens, gloves, hats and snow pants. Our classes will be working in the backyard this year through the winter. **If your kids have outgrown last year's gear consider donating it to Prairie!** Having these items available to borrow at Prairie will make outdoor time possible even when those items are not brought from home.

As always, thank you for your support! Here's to a restful and connected holiday season for us all!



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### **Announcement from Rev. Sandy**

FINALLY... BYOT will actually begin, after being rescheduled a couple of times. What is BYOT, you ask? BYOT is short for "Building Your Own Theology", a series of workshops produced by the Unitarian Universalist Association to help us explore, among other things: your beliefs; where they come from; how (or if!) they are evolving; whether or not the beliefs of others are generally similar to yours or seem to you to have "come out of left field"; and much more. We will have the first meeting on Saturday, December 12, beginning at 10 a.m., at Prairie, probably in the Annex, going until noon "or so". I am planning to hold at least three sessions of BYOT (next sessions will be January 9 and February 13), but if participants want to continue after that, then we will do so. QUESTIONS? Ask Rev. Sandy

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## **From Rosemary Dorney—Historical Tidbits**

### "Prairie and Upham Woods"

Originally Prairie's annual retreat was held at Camp Upham Woods, a University of Wisconsin-Extension (now "Outreach") facility in the Wisconsin Dells. It had once been built for and was mainly used by 4-H members. (Thus the "boys" and "girls" sides in the cabins.) Wooded, hilly, and next to an offshoot of the Wisconsin River, it was a beautiful location, ideally situated for lively young folks, and for a couple of days' withdrawal from everyday demands. We actually had our very own island, too, created by the land between the Wisconsin and its calmer (and safer!) side-stream. During our earliest days there, we'd even been allowed to swim in the stream, which was in view of the main lodge.

We'd go up there late Friday afternoon, bringing our casseroles and desserts for a sort of ongoing potluck as more people -- and dishes -- arrived. At the lodge, a large-ish building near the parking lot, we'd receive cabin assignments so we could try to get settled before pitch dark. Early on, the steep climb to the several uphill cabins was not illuminated; woe to anyone who hadn't brought a flashlight with a strong battery!

Breakfast was early. Those who missed it had a long wait till lunch. Besides, since we usually spent a good part of Saturday exploring the terrain, it was wise to start out fortified. Our day was a mix of indoor and outdoor activities. The Upham Woods retreat was a grand opportunity for officer powwows, planning sessions, play readings, and discussions of every nature. And one mustn't overlook the many exchanges that took place in informal settings, whether while waiting in line for a bathroom sink or setting tables. For those to whom none of the scheduled offerings appealed, or who weren't yet ready to get out and explore, our dining area provided plenty of between-mealtimes space for card games, jigsaw puzzles, crafts groups, knitters, whatever. It was also a great place just to hang out and watch the passing parade.

At our earliest retreats, the on-the-premises person we most interacted with was one Meredith, a student intern, waterfront/nature counselor. It was she who doled out canoes and conducted raft trips up and down the inlet. She always stopped before entering the river proper, since rafting on the Wisconsin by a bunch of novices isn't highly recommended. (Oh, but do remind me to tell you some time about this claustrophobic writer and Meredith's introduction to Dells caves!)

And, of course, her assistance was essential to groups wanting to reach the island for nature trips. Those were ably conducted by Prairie's botanists, both UW profs and avid gardeners. Somewhere out there, there's an artistic slide of the nearly-50 fungi and mushrooms collected by highly knowledgeable Rebecca and Ted Clark. (No, we did NOT eat any of them!)

After supper there was mad scrambling to set up folk-dancing equipment, also to prepare skits, poems, jokes for the talent show to follow. An evening of exercise and hilarity left us totally exhausted.

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### **Message from the President—Gary Gates**

It has been almost a year and a half since I became Prairie's President. I've learned a lot. Which is to say I was totally ignorant of what I needed to do. Things have gone very well in spite of my ignorance. For this fact I have to give thanks to the many capable and dedicated committee chairs and staff who were knowledgeable and always willing to do more than their share.

Now I feel like I'm getting on top of what needs doing. Which probably means I'm about to make some big mistakes. If I do make mistakes, however, I feel comfortable that others will correct or guide me as necessary.

I especially want to thank our administrator, Dan Klock. Without his assistance I would have been totally lost.

Obviously we have other wonderful employees and congregation members who are carrying out their responsibilities in exemplary fashion. Dan just happens to be the person I, as President, most depend on.

Why am I reflecting on these matters at this time? Because we will soon be needing to elect new or continuing Board members and officers and Committee chairs. I am tempted to say that I've had my turn and would like to see someone else take over.

There are many in the congregation who are better qualified than I am to be President. Most of them have already been President and feel that now it is someone else's turn. As a small congregation we cannot afford to "let someone else do it". Think about what you can do to keep Prairie special

When I retired 22 years ago I vowed I'd never again let myself get in a position to have to attend meetings. Prairie has given me the chance to rethink my aversion to meetings. Thank you.

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**Please consider volunteering for and participating in one or more of Prairie's committees or groups. A full list is located on Prairie's website: <http://uuprairie.org/aboutus/#com> or contact Karen Deaton ([wisconsinkaren@gmail.com](mailto:wisconsinkaren@gmail.com)).**

## **Octogenarian Near-Thanksgiving Dinner Draws a Good Crowd**

The Octogenarian Near-Thanksgiving Dinner drew a large share of Prairieites including 14 people age 80 and over: 3 were in their 90s. The dinner, a service-auction item masterminded by Patty Stockdale and put on by her and Mary Mullen, was held on Saturday, November 14. The seniors got their dinner free.

Ruth Calden and Rosemarie Lester provided music at the beginning of the program while Carol Steinhart and Mary Mullen played background music during the break between the main eating and the dessert. The guests all talked briefly about a turning point in their lives. The event raised \$290 for Prairie's 2014-15 budget.

Many thanks to Kathy Converse who made nametags for all the guests, cut up the turkeys, and then afterward, with husband Randy, stayed for hours helping to clean up. Rosemary Dorney also helped in the hour before the meal and then for a long time on the cleanup.



These are the 11 octogenarians and 3 nonagenarians who came to the dinner. Front row: Millie Moffat, Mary Frantz, Rose Smith, Warren Hagstrom, and Ed Kolner. Middle row: Carol Steinhart and Metje Butler. Back row: Rosemary Dorney, Orrie Loucks, Elinor Loucks, John Frantz, Terri Prudlo, Ruth Calden, and Rosemarie Lester. The 3 who are 90 or older are Mary Frantz, John Frantz, and Rosemarie Lester.