

# Prairie Fire

February 2016

Editor: Phyllis Long plong373@gmail.com

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## Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

<b>Fri</b>	<b>Feb 5</b>	6:00 p.m.— <b>Board Game Night</b>
<b>Sat</b>	<b>Feb 6</b>	9:00 a.m.— <b>Prairie WOW</b> meets
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 7</b>	8:45 a.m.— <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> in the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 7</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Rozaria Girls Club</b> — presented by Lucy Chikowero
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 7</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Mystery Friends</b> — week 1
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 7</b>	11:45 a.m.— <b>Humanist Union</b> meets: potluck followed by a discussion of <b>Evolution and Feeling God’s Presence.</b>
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 7</b>	5:30 p.m.— <b>Prairie Men’s Group</b> meets
<b>Mon</b>	<b>Feb 8</b>	6:00 p.m.— <b>Finance Committee</b> meets in the Annex
<b>Mon</b>	<b>Feb 8</b>	7:00 p.m.— <b>Program Committee</b> meets in the Meeting Hall
<b>Sat</b>	<b>Feb 13</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Building Your Own Theology</b>
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 14</b>	8:45 a.m.— <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> in the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 14</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>With Love to Samuel</b> —presented by Rev. Sandra Ingham
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 14</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Mystery Friends</b> — week 2
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 14</b>	11:45 a.m.— <b>Prairie Board</b> meets
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	8:45 a.m.— <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> in the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Justice, Equity and Compassion in Human Relations</b> —presented by Faith Cholvin
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Mystery Friends</b> — week 3
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	11:30 a.m.— <b>Soup Sunday</b>
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	11:45 a.m. The book club will discuss— <b>Cold Sassy Tree</b> by Olive Ann Burns
<b>Tues</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	1:30 p.m.— <b>Prairie Elders</b> meets
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 28</b>	8:45 a.m.— <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> in the Annex
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 28</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Yahara House</b> — Speaker to be announced
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Feb 28</b>	10:00 a.m.— <b>Mystery Friends</b> — week 4 and <b>Party</b>
<b>Fri</b>	<b>Mar 5</b>	6:00 p.m.— <b>Board Game Night</b>
<b>Fri</b>	<b>May 6</b>	<b>Prairie Retreat</b> begins
<b>Sun</b>	<b>May 8</b>	<b>Prairie Retreat</b> ends

February 7—Lucy Chikowero will be doing a presentation on the *Rozaria Girls Club*, a special project with 10 schools in Murewa, Zimbabwe and expanding globally. The club is intended to reach the girls as they are the leaders of tomorrow and equal partners on mother earth. It's all about creating safe spaces where girls can learn, share experiences, give each other peer support and help each other grow while realizing their full potential. The main goal is to try and open the girls' minds on what is happening globally, the challenges girls are facing, solutions they might have, advocacy ideas and guidance as they are getting into adolescence.

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February 7—The title of the Humanist Union's program for Sunday February 7 is *Evolution and Feeling God's Presence*. A panel of readers will lead a discussion of the ideas presented in John C. Wathey's new book, *The Illusion of God's Presence: The Biological Origins of Spiritual Longing*. In the Wathey's view "evolution is the window by which we should understand religion." He is a biologist who has studied the biology of the human nervous system. We will start with our usual potluck lunch at 11:45 a.m. followed by the program from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.

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February 14—In recognition of Black History Month, this service will combine elegy, celebration, history and mix it all with a dash of love. Rev. Ingham will share some personal memories and some institutional ones as we take a closer look at how we interact with people whose skin is not the same color as ours...we personally, as well as we who are part of the Unitarian Universalist Association. A more complete title for today might be *With Love to Samuel...Wherever You Are*.

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February 21—Black History Month is an auspicious time to explore the second of our principles. Faith Cholvin will kick off our Seven Principles series with a presentation.

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February 28—Yahara House offers adults with mental illness a path to recovery through relationships and work. It is built on the clubhouse model which guarantees: a place to belong, meaningful relationships, meaningful work and a place to return. Yahara House emphasizes opportunities for members to regain their rightful place in society as family members, friends, neighbors and coworkers. It is dedicated to advancing recovery, cultural competence and community reintegration.

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May 6—Prairie's annual retreat will take place this year from Friday, May 6 to Sunday, May 8. Once again it will be at Bethel Horizons, located near Dodgeville. There will be programs for all ages. Registration will take place beginning in late March and run through early April. More information will be forthcoming in the March newsletter. Mark

your calendars!

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### **MUSINGS FROM THE MINISTER—Sandra Ingham**

A friend recently gave me a subscription to "The New Yorker", one of my two favorite magazines (the other one is "Yes!" magazine). This particular friend is a conservative Republican. I am the opposite. We have lively conversations, to put it mildly. I have subscribed to "The New Yorker" on and off for several years, but not for awhile. I often get discouraged when I can't keep up with all the reading I want and need to do. As I said to my friend: "The good news is that I am enjoying having "The New Yorker" again. The bad news is that I may have to quit my job and withdraw from all social activity so I can keep up with this weekly magazine!"

So much of life is about balance. Because I have been battling bronchitis for most of January, I have been able to not only keep up with "The New Yorker", but also I have managed to catch up on other reading. I have been sick, but not too sick to read and do a little more writing than usual. This kind of illness is almost a blessing. The flip side, though, is that during this time period, I have not done anything remotely resembling physical exertion, what many call exercise. It has been four weeks since I last took a real hike.

I never think of exercise as exercise because hiking, swimming, bicycling, walking, tennis -- all of these activities are such an integral part of my life -- the more strenuous the better. I was fortunate to have parents who were active physically all of their lives. They set a wonderful example (and probably passed on some pretty useful genes in this area). Now I feel completely out of balance because I have not used my body for a month.

Striking the right balance in our daily living is tricky. We are all so busy. People in our culture have more options and demands for using their time than perhaps at any other point in history. Is this good or bad, I wonder? I am intrigued by the connection between balance and harmony. How are balance and harmony related? Does leading a balanced life lead to harmony? Does achieving harmony lead to living balanced lives? I am using the word harmony the way many Native Americans use it: being in right relationship with ourselves, with each other and with the environment.

May you have both balance and harmony in this new year. -- Rev. Sandy

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

I am encouraged by the present status of our annual budget. When we presented the budget at the November parish meeting we were about \$4500 short of being able to fund all the things necessary to carry on with our normal commitments. This was based on the projection that we would carry over about \$5000 from the 2015 budget.

In fact, while I have not yet seen the final figures, it looks like the carryover will be over \$12,000. Thus we should be able to fully fund our budget with room to spare.

I hope that we will use our fiscal strength as a base for promoting our UU values in the world around us. I know that the members of Prairie feel strongly about these values, as summarized in the seven principles. Let's use our strength to show our commitment to these values.

As expressed so elegantly in the hymn *Love Will Guide Us*, which we sang on January 24, “give from deep within you. You can change the world with your love.”

I have made clear my feeling that one way to do this would be to share our Sunday offertory collections with charities or social causes. If you feel that there is a better way, please offer your thoughts to others so we may have a meaningful discussion about how best to proceed. To me the only unacceptable course would be to say we need just to take care of ourselves.

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### **From the SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE**

Here is an update on programs, events that Social Action committee members regularly participate in. We include Molly Plunkett and Pam Gates (co-chairs), Faith Cholvin, Millie Moffat, Bob Park, and Ken Haydock (friend of committee.)

### **Allied Partners News**

This consortium of churches supporting the Allied Neighborhood has launched several new initiatives.

*Job Bop:* Starting in October we held a Job Bop on two Fridays a month at the Boys and Girls Club. Volunteers met with people interested in finding and applying for jobs, updating or creating a resume, or writing a cover letter to accompany an application. The computer lab at the center was used. Job notices were printed out and volunteers as well as staff from Forward Wisconsin (an agency that contracts with the state to provide employment assistance to recipients of food stamps) were on site to work with folks. Participation by residents has been low but volunteers decided to continue through the winter. Molly is coordinating effort during winter months and would be happy if any other Prairie person wants to join up. *Scholarships:* Allied Partners will sponsor a scholarship of \$500 a semester to a residents who want to pursue a educational or vocational program or certificate. *Computer Training:* We are investigating offering a computer literacy program at the Boys and Girls Club since most jobs require online application these days. *Funding Received:* The Allied Wellness Center has received substantial funding from St. Mary’s Hospital for its ongoing work of assisting residents with transportation to medical appointments, with copays or coverage for prescriptions, and provision of basic assistive devices like crutches, slings and with personal hygiene products. *Housing:* It was announced at a meeting of Allied Stake Holders that Habitat for Humanity has purchased 18 lots near the Boys and Girls Club to build homes for residents. There is regular support to residents who are facing eviction from Allied Partner funds.

### **Allied Grocery Progress:**

Faith Cholvin and Jim Lyne have been attending meetings since last summer on the effort to create a food supplier in the neighborhood. The Allied Coop has received the City of Madison \$300,000 (+?) grant for planning and development. No existing business entity was interested in coming into the neighborhood. City advisors and people from the Willy Street Cooperative have been working with various groups. As a first stage effort the neighborhood is trying to set up a buyers club.

## **Moses:**

Moses is the Madison chapter of a statewide assemblage of churches organizing to exert influence for social change. Pam Gates has been faithfully attending Moses meetings and provides this report.

MOSES, is an interfaith group currently focused primarily on Wisconsin's embarrassingly high rate of incarceration, particularly of African American males (highest rate in the nation!)

MOSES meets the first Saturday of every month at an area church; meetings are quite informative, and anyone interested can attend.

MOSES is currently working on reducing our incarceration rate through a program called ROC Wisconsin; ROC stands for Restoring Our Communities. Focuses of this effort include reducing crimeless revocations for parolees; treatment alternatives and diversions (e.g. drug courts); release of old law prisoners (people who have already served the time they were expected to serve when sentenced, but who are being refused parole in the current more punitive climate); and compassionate release of sick and elderly prisoners. Effort is also being directed at post-release issues such as jobs and housing, and on in-prison concerns such as inappropriate use of solitary confinement. A new group participating in MOSES and its statewide umbrella, WISDOM, is called EX-Prisoners Organizing (EXPO).

Some MOSES members have been very active in the effort to discourage building a new Dane County jail. Others help Dane County folks participating in a Deferred Sentencing program access services they qualify for.

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

On THURSDAY, FEB. 4, 5-7 p.m. at Grace Episcopal Church on the Capitol Square, WISDOM will hold a listening session on Wis. Department of Corrections policies. People will tell their experiences with issues I have cited above; it should be an eloquently informative session.

Talk to Pam Gates for more on any of the above.

**Homeless Shelter Breakfast and RoadHome meals are coordinated by Paula Pachiarz and Erin Bosch respectively (out of the goodness of their hearts).** Please sign up.

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

### **MONTHLY THEMES**

RE students & families received the first edition of Prairie's new Parent Resource Newsletter at the first of the year exploring January's theme of 'Letting Go'. February's theme is 'Diversity & Unity'. Expect to see the newsletter available by email, on the RE website page, and on the front table in the entryway by the first of the month. The newsletter is meant to function as a conversation starter at home throughout the month; a way for families to find deeper connections to UU ideas and practices.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Mystery Friends**— The 4 Sundays in February will have Mystery Friend letter exchanges. This is Prairie's annual 'upstairs/downstairs' letter exchange program. Students and

adults who are interested in participating should email Holly at [prairie\\_uu\\_dre@outlook.com](mailto:prairie_uu_dre@outlook.com) by Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup>. Participants will be assigned a 'mystery friend' and a code name. Each Sunday of February participants will bring their letters (without names!) to be exchanged secretly. Throughout the month the goal is to try to guess the secret identity of your Mystery Friend, which will be revealed in a fun afternoon of lunch and games on February 28<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to sign up or would like more details, email Holly at the above address.

**February 28<sup>th</sup>** - Extended day RE program on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of February will be a time for our Mystery Friends party! The party will take place from 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.

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

The month of January was set aside to collect money for the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to help fund help for worldwide refugees. The 3-5 class, Twrch House, spearheaded this campaign and we are looking forward to their report on the amount of money raised.

The 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> class continues to raise money for Heifer International in many creative ways. If you have not yet found an opportunity to donate to their cause, or if you are ready to donate again, there will be many more upcoming opportunities in the second half of the RE year.

### **ITEMS WANTED**

We are still looking for donations of **warm mittens, gloves, hats and snow pants – especially for smaller sizes (2T-5T). These items can often be found cheaply at Goodwill or St. Vinnies.** Our classes will be working in the backyard this year through the winter and they always want to go outside to play together on our extended days. **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 loving February!

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### **Announcement from Sandy**

WHO ARE OUR NEIGHBORS? "Who Are Our Neighbors" is the title of a workshop designed to help us build stronger intercultural relationships and give us new tools and concepts in working for successful multicultural ministries. Lisa Presley from the MidAmerica Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association will lead this program. The workshop will be held MARCH 18 & 19 at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist congregation. All three UU congregations in Madison are sponsoring this event as one way to respond to the death of Tony Robinson in our community, as well as to the larger "Black Lives Matter" movement. We will gather on Friday evening, March 18, and then most of the day on Saturday, approximately from 9 until 5. There will be a registration fee, exact amount not available yet, but probably in the \$50 range. [NOTE: Scholarships, full and partial will be

available. Please talk to Rev. Sandy if you are interested.] We hope to have a good turnout from Prairie for this program. More details as they become available. Some of what you might learn: how to improve your communication skills; how to continue the conversation within your congregation; some insights into the many components of conflict; possible next steps, personally and organizationally, for continuing this work. WE HOPE THAT MANY PRAIRIE PEOPLE WILL ATTEND THIS PROGRAM!!!!

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### **Another word about the Prairie Retreat...**

If you would like to present a workshop or craft, or have an idea for a workshop you would like to see, please contact Phyllis Long at [plong373@gmail.com](mailto:plong373@gmail.com).

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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 for more information: [wisconsinkaren@gmail.org](mailto:wisconsinkaren@gmail.org).*