

Prairie Fire

May 2016

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Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

- Sun May 1** 5:00 a.m.—*Men's Shelter Breakfast*
- Sun May 1** 8:45 a.m.—*Choir Rehearsal*—meets in the Annex
- Sun May 1** 10:00 a.m.—*All You Ever Needed to Know About Beltane*—When May first falls on a Sunday, we have to celebrate the cross quarter day, Beltane. Rumor has it there may even be a Maypole and dancing...
- Sun May 1** 12:30-1:30 p.m.—*Humanist Union* meets
- Sun May 1** 5:30-7:00 p.m.—*Men's Group*—potluck followed by discussion
- Fri May 6** 5:00 p.m.—*Prairie Retreat*—begins at Bethel Horizons
- Sun May 8** *Interfaith Hospitality Network Week*—May 8 to 15
- Sun May 8** 10:00 a.m.—*A Case for Optimism on Climate Change*—a TED talk by Al Gore at Prairie Meeting House
- Sun May 8** 12:00 noon—*Prairie Retreat*—ends at Bethel Horizons
- Mon May 9** 6:00 p.m.—*Finance Committee*—meets
- Mon May 9** 7:00 p.m.—*Program Committee*—meets
- Sun May 15** 8:45 a.m.—*Choir Rehearsal*—meets in the Annex
- Sun May 15** 10:00 a.m.—*Acceptance of One Another and Encouragement to Spiritual Growth*—by Ron Frye. We continue our series on the seven principles with a presentation by one of our newest members.
- Sun May 15** 7:00 p.m.—*Roy Zimmerman Concert* at Prairie
- Sun May 22** 8:45 a.m.—*Choir Rehearsal*—meets in the Annex
- Sun May 22** 10:00 a.m.—*Transition Sunday*—This is our annual Sunday, set aside to honor our Religious Education programs and students who are transitioning within the program. This year we are honoring James Hughes, who will graduate from high school. Also, you don't want to miss the debut of Dean Schroeder's song honoring our RE teachers.
- Sun May 22** 11:30 a.m.—*Soup Sunday*
- Sun May 22** 12:00 noon—*Parish Meeting*
- Tues May 24** 1:30 p.m.—*Prairie Elders*—meets in the Annex
- Sun May 29** 8:45 a.m.—*Choir Rehearsal*—meets in the Annex
- Sun May 29** 10:00 a.m.—*Civil Society*—by Rev. Sandra Ingham
- Sun June 5** 8:45 a.m.—*Choir Rehearsal*—meets in the Annex

Sun June 5 10:00 a.m.—*Urban Canid Project*—by Prof. David Drake

Sun June 5 11:45 a.m.—*Humanist Union* meets

Sun June 12 8:45 a.m.—*Choir Rehearsal*—meets in the Annex

Sun June 12 10:00 a.m.—*Summer Reads*—by Nevenah and Rose Smith. Weather permitting, we will celebrate our annual Summer Reads program in the backyard of the Annex. This is one of our DYI programs. Bring a book recommendation to share and a lawn chair to sit on.

Sunday, May 1—The living tradition which we share draws from many sources. Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature is one. Beltane falls halfway between the Spring Equinox and the Summer Solstice and is an important date in the calendar of Celtic traditions. What better way to celebrate this wonderful time of year than to dance around a Maypole and don a crown of flowers.

Sunday, May 1—Following the Maypole festivities outside, the Humanist Union will have a potluck lunch around noon, and then have a discussion, 12:30 TO 1:30 p.m., on the topic: *How might the Humanist Union help create a community attractive to atheists?* Led by a panel of folks with ideas on the subject. Everyone interested in the topic is invited.

Sunday, May 8—Please consider volunteering to serve dinner or various other jobs at IHN/The Road Home. Contact Erin Bosch for more information about IHN (238-6285) or sign-up to volunteer at <http://midvalelutheran.org/share/ourcommunity/road-home>.

Sunday, May 29—*Civil Society*—Memorial Day Weekend seems like an appropriate time to contemplate what a civil society looks like. I don't think that we have one here in the United States of America. I don't know if we have ever had one in this country, not that the rest of the world can lay claims to one either. What does a civil society have to do with Memorial Day? Stephen Hawking recently asked the question, "What makes humans unique?" He then answered it with "transcending limits." We humans limit ourselves with hate, war, jealousy, fear—any number of things, all of which lead to uncivil societies. This morning's reflections and discussion might even bring us back around to Karen Armstrong's book, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, which gets to the heart of how to build and maintain a truly civil society.

Sunday, June 5—Prof. Drake heads the UW's *Urban Canid Project*, studying the behavior of the coyotes and foxes now living within Madison.

Musings from the Minister—Sandra Ingham

Because of a commitment in Sauk City, I was a little late getting to a meeting at Prairie a couple of weeks ago. Walking into the middle of a discussion, the first thing that I heard was "Prairie isn't growing. It isn't even maintaining." What? Not growing, not even ta"maintaining," though I am not clear on what that means. Hmmm, thought I. It

doesn't feel that way to me, but then I am biased, having both a personal and professional investment in Prairie's well being, which would include, presumably, growth. What was I missing?

Upon reflection, I realized a couple of things. First of all, if we are using numbers to define growth, we have to agree on what "baseline" we will use. I am pretty certain that we have gained more members than we have lost during the last year or two. But, if we are talking about net gain over the last, say, five or ten years, perhaps there has not been numerical growth. I don't know what baseline was used in the meeting I mentioned above. I do know, from many years of experience with congregations—both as an office manager and as a minister—that keeping track of the actual membership count is not simple. It is a constantly changing number and an elusive one because of the fine line between what constitutes membership and what constitutes being a "friend" of the congregation. Many congregations prefer to count pledging units and use that number as the more accurate figure for membership.

The second consideration that I thought of when reflecting on this subject was that I define congregational growth as having at least four important parts (in no particular order): (1) growth in numbers; (2) growth in our relationships with others who are part of the congregation; (3) growth in our outreach to the larger community; and (4) our individual, personal, spiritual growth. I believe that Prairie has and is experiencing all these aspects of growth, though, of course, I cannot speak for anyone but myself.

However we define membership and whatever count we arrive at, I think that we are growing—check out the religious education classes on any given Sunday morning, try to find a seat in the meeting hall at the beginning of most Sunday morning services, consider all the activities that go on at Prairie during the week and you will find a growing, vibrant congregation. May you find Prairie to be a special place for personal growth.

Happy Spring! Rev. Sandy

Message from the President—Gary Gates

At the Retreat in May we will have a session for people to talk with the Board about what they see, or would like to see, in Prairie's future. This could also cover what you like or don't like in Prairie's present.

We would like it if you could identify possible subjects before the Retreat so we could have some time to think about them before having to respond.

Please send a list of any subjects you think should be covered to me at gig.gts@gmail.com. I will forward them to the other Board members. Thank you.

From Al and Aileen Nettleton

You and your family are invited to join us and our family to celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary Open House, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Saturday, June 11, at Prairie. Childcare will be available.

Please RSVP by June 6 to aanett@sbcglobal.net.

On Sunday, May 15th at 7:00 p.m., Prairie is proud to present a one night performance of *This Machine* by Roy Zimmerman. This is a fund raiser for Prairie. The tickets are \$18, or pay what you can.

This Machine is ninety minutes of Roy Zimmerman's hilarious, rhyme-intensive original songs. The title is a reference to Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, to be sure, but also an acknowledgement that songwriting does good work in the world. "Sometimes I think satire is the most hopeful and heartfelt form of expression," says Roy, "because in calling out the world's absurdities and laughing in their face, I'm affirming the real possibility of change." Roy's songs have been heard on HBO and Showtime. He's shared stages with Bill Maher, Robin Williams, Ellen DeGeneres, John Oliver, Kate Clinton and George Carlin. He's been profiled on NPR's *All Things Considered*, and he's a featured blogger for the Huffington Post.

Circle of Friends—Holly Tellander, Dir. Religious Education

Another year is wrapping up in RE ~ and we're still busy!

MONTHLY THEMES

May's theme is *mindfulness*, look for the Family Resource Newsletter to show up by email soon. It will be full of ideas for engaging with the monthly theme at home and while on the go. NO PAD this month! Look for this popular program to return next fall with a new twist!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Transition Sunday – May 22nd – Join us to celebrate our students who are transitioning from middle school to high school. This year we will also recognize James Hughes who will be graduating from high school. If you have not yet written a letter of memory or encouragement for James, there is still time! Please send letters to Holly Tellander at prairie_uu_dre@outlook.com by **May 15th**.

Summer Sundays are coming soon! We have a fun calendar of events planned – each specifically designed to help students engage with social justice issues, learn about and honor our sources, and practice our principles. We'll have games, crafts, projects and lots of fun! Keep your eye out for our summer calendar and put it on the fridge so kids can squeeze in all the Prairie fun possible this summer!

OWL (Our Whole Lives) @ PRAIRIE!

Students in grades K-2 are currently participating in OWL classes at Prairie. The kids are working hard and learning a lot so that they can be ambassadors – helping other kids stay safe and informed. Next winter we will run an OWL class for kids in grades 4-6. We see this opportunity as social justice and outreach for our larger community.

SUMMER IS COMING

Please consider donating your time, energy and enthusiasm for environmental stewardship to our youth this summer. The time commitment is very small and the reward is very great! Many activities are already planned and materials are already gathered. All we need

is your presence and your enthusiasm! It truly is a blessing to work for a community in which Religious Education is as valued and supported as it is here at Prairie. Both our established families and the new families who are joining us every month have expressed what a special and welcoming place this is for kids of all ages. Thanks to everyone who serves our kids!

Students learn about conservation and honor our 7th principle through participation in the planning and development of the outdoor classroom – it is also a wonderful opportunity for some of our child-free members to pass on their wisdom and skills to Prairie youth!

AND SO IS ANOTHER RE YEAR!

And that means teachers are needed! Currently we are looking for 2-3 new faces in grades K-2 & 3-5. Grades K-2 will be participating in a Montessori-style ‘spirit play’ story-based, free-play experience. Grades 3-5 will be running a “Jedi Academy” to engage with the idea of mindfulness.

The time commitment for teachers will be minimal - no more than twice a month. Please talk to Holly Tellander ASAP if you are interested in either of these opportunities!

As always, thank you for your support!

Here’s to a warm and sunny May!



From Rosemary Dorney—Historical Tidbits

A tense moment in Prairie’s history...

It was at our annual budget meeting that the unthinkable occurred: There was a significant gap between the proposed budget and pledged funds. What to do? Until then we had NEVER passed a budget that exceeded our anticipated income. We made, as we still do, a list prioritizing the items we’d add during the coming year as funds came in. Trouble was, there were some really urgent needs on that list.

Someone then suggested we take a break, so that both individuals and family groups could go into a private corner and seriously consider their ability to increase a pledged amount. Fortunately, the Montessori school at which we were then meeting offered numerous classrooms suitable for our purpose.

Discussion raged, vigorously and at length. The energy level throughout was almost palpable! We wanted to solve this dilemma. (Since progress was obviously being made, no one called “time.”)

Eventually the hubbub subsided, and all agreed it was time to resume the formal meeting. The treasurer then stood and announced a stunningly altered budget proposal: not only had the congregation met our basic financial goals, the amounts newly pledged exceeded all expectations! So, after that discussion break, we were able to return virtually all deferred items to the proposed budget, right then and there.

Our treasurer indicated that during the break many pledgers had come up to him and raised the amount they planned to give for the coming year. Some increments were very small, some unexpectedly large. Always, he said, he had the distinct feeling that all of them had dug deep—and were proud of it. The connecting thread was a mutual caring, and a communal effort to give our society what it needed to function well.

Obviously the time-out had been a good idea—and was productive. It allowed us all the opportunity to review our personal needs vis-a-vis Prairie's. Oh? And the budget amount that caused such Sturm und Drang? Under \$15,000—and that, if I recall correctly, was *after* the additions. The largest budget we had ever proposed, up 'till then. And enthusiastically accepted as amended, as well as meticulously observed in the year to allow.

That was in the late 1970's. We were a lot smaller, and poorer, then. And just look at us now! Truly, we *have* come a long way, as we approach our fiftieth anniversary.

RMD

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 at: wisconsinkaren@gmail.org.