

# Prairie Fire

August 2016

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## Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

**Sat Aug 6** 5:00 a.m.—**Men's Shelter breakfast**

**Sat Aug 6** 9:00 a.m.—**Prairie WOW**—meets in the Annex

**Sun Aug 7** 10:00 a.m.—**In Three-Part Harmony**—Rev. Sandy will continue her reflections on ethics. Is it possible for reason, rationalism and reverence to all be used to form a theology that everyone in a Unitarian Universalist congregation is comfortable with? (Though I never want you to get too comfortable in your beliefs!) Reasonability and rationality are usually our preferred ways of being. There is nothing wrong with those attributes. Where might reverence enter in here, though? Reason and rational are sometimes too calm and quiet for me. One thing that I brought back from this year's General Assembly is that it is important to remember passion and its role in our faith tradition.

**Sun Aug 7** 12:30-1:30—**Humanist Union Discusses Writers Humanists Should Know**—Our program will be a discussion of "Writers Humanists Should Know." What writers would you recommend to humanists? They could be authors of fiction or nonfiction books that support humanist principles, the authors of magazine articles, bloggers or screen writers. They could be writers of today or from the past. As usual we will start with a potluck lunch at noon. This month we will meet in the Annex, holding our discussion in the Annex library, also known as the Chapru Room. Come with your ideas for Humanist Union programs for the coming year. Should we have regular book discussion and film viewing events?

**Su Aug 7** 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.—**Men's Group**—meets. There will be a potluck followed by discussion.

**Mon Aug 8** 6:00 p.m.—**Finance Committee**—meets.

**Mon Aug 8** 7:00 p.m.—**Program Committee**—meets.

**Sun Aug 14** 10:00 a.m.—**Now What?**—Now what can we do after all the shootings and killings of the past weeks and months? So many needless deaths, so much senseless violence, so much mind-numbing sadness. Joanna Macy, one of my "honeys" (because she has so much wisdom to share), stresses the importance of not just naming our grief and pain, but also talking about the hurts and the tragedies. Today's service could be a place and a space to do that. But, it will also be a quiet, calm place where, hopefully, we won't use very many words. This morning, we want to draw more on the Quaker-style of being together than on our usual talk-and-response-style. -- Rev. Sandy

**Sun Aug 14** 11:45—**Prairie Board**—meets in the Annex.

**Sun Aug 21** 10:00 a.m.—**Circle of Support**—by John Givens of Madison Area Urban Ministry Circles of Support is a reentry program that matches formerly incarcerated individuals (Core Team Member) with volunteers in the community (Circle Members) to provide the social support and positive community the Core Team Member may be lacking. Many people return from prison to the same environment that encouraged the crimes they committed. The allure of the old life can be too much to withstand without support. Circles provide a safe place where the Core Team Member can be heard, encouraged, and respected while they discuss the challenges they may be experiencing as they transition back into the community. The volunteers are able to provide them with alternative solutions to problems and mentoring as they work through the challenges. The Circles of Support offer an environment that is positive, supportive and respectful but that also holds them accountable for achieving and succeeding in their weekly goals. In other words, the Circle offers the support individuals often need to be successful in their return to the community.

**Sun Aug 21** 11:30 a.m.—**Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman! Adventures of a Curious Character**—by the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman. Richard Feynman thrived on outrageous adventures. Here he recounts in his inimitable voice his experience trading ideas on atomic physics with Einstein and Bohn and ideas on gambling with Nick the Greek; cracking the uncrackable safes guarding the most deeply held nuclear secrets; accompanying a ballet on his bongo drums; painting a naked female toreador. Amazon review, 350 pages. Suggested by John Frantz.

**Tues Aug 23** 1:00 p.m.—**Prairie Elders**—Prairie Elders will meet at 1:00, Tuesday, August 23, in the Prairie Annex. We will share our top five movie favorites. Elders meets in the Annex the 4th Tuesday of each month to chat and enjoy shared snacks, with coffee and tea provided. For more information, contact Al Nettleton (238-6053) or Penny Eiler (852-8750).

**Sun Aug 28** 10:00 a.m.—**UU Sci-Fi**—by Robin Proud. Science fiction is often dismissed as a lightweight or juvenile genre. But as speculative fiction, it asks some of the most important questions there are - *Where have we come from and where are we going?*, *What does it mean to be human?* and *What is the best way to live?*. We'll look at how this genre reflects our UU principles.

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## **MUSINGS FROM THE MINISTER**

By the time you read this, I should be somewhere in Romania. I have been amused by the reactions that I get when I tell people that I am going to Transylvania. People who have known me for a long time will assume that I said *Pennsylvania* because they know that is where I grew up and that my sister still lives there. Then there is the way-too-often reaction of, "Oh, you're going to see Dracula?!" No, I am not, nor has there ever been an actual Dracula. Most often, there is the blank-look response because most people don't seem to have a clue about where Transylvania is, let alone why anyone would want to go there.

I have also been surprised by how many Unitarian Universalists don't know why Transylvania is so very important to Unitarianism. They don't know who Francis David or King Sigismund were. Unitarianism in what we now call Romania and Hungary can be traced back to at least the mid-1500s. According to Andrea Greenwood and Mark W. Harris in their book, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, "The population with the largest concentration of Unitarians can be found in Transylvania, an area of Romania that was once an independent kingdom."

These Transylvanian Unitarian cousins of ours have been persecuted *for centuries* -- centuries, most recently by the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, who was deposed and killed, along with his wife Elena, in 1989. The early Unitarian thinkers and believers were mostly of the upper class. There are many sad stories about the nobility being excommunicated from the state churches of the time and then forced out of their homes, losing all their property and possessions and wandering across Europe, in search of a place to be.

I have a feeling that you may learn more about Transylvania, in particular, and Unitarianism in Eastern Europe, in general, on some Sunday mornings during the upcoming church year.

Lots of exciting things are going to be happening at Prairie, once we "start up" again following the summer months. NOTE: Our annual in-gathering ceremony will take place on the **FIRST SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER** this year. The date is SEPTEMBER 4. And, we will be sharing something other than water this time. **(NO NEED TO GATHER WATER TO BRING THAT DAY.)** Your hard-working, brilliant Program Committee has lots of good things planned for August (see elsewhere in this newsletter for more about that), September and beyond.

And, I know for a fact that the equally hard-working and brilliant Religious Education Committee, along with Holly, our fabulous Director of Religious Education, also have lots of amazing things planned for August, September and beyond (this information is also to be found in other parts of "Prairie Fire"). So much to look forward to... but, let's not wish time away. Enjoy the rest of your summer! Rev. Sandy

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## **Circle of Friends—Holly Tellander, Director RE**

### **Prairie RE August Happenings**

We've been having a great time outside in RE this summer! Lots of fun projects and great attendance!

We are looking forward to another great year in RE starting in September. Keep checking the website and our RE Facebook page for updates on curriculum, social justice projects and events.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

Join us for the annual in-gathering all ages service on **Sunday, September 4<sup>th</sup>**. See website for more details.

Join us for the official start of RE classes on **Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>**.

Hope you are all having a great summer! Squeeze out as much fun as you can!



As always, thanks for your support!



## **From the Social Action Committee**

**Allied Partners**—Allied Partners is a group of 17 churches that support the Allied Dunns Marsh Neighborhood. The group, with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the lead, sponsors a food pantry at the Boys and Girls Club on Wednesday mornings and evenings, supports the programs offered by the Allied Wellness Center (which received a \$5000 grant from the Evjue Foundation based on an application yours truly filed). The group funds an eviction prevention fund to help families facing eviction, and also supports the Allied Dunn’s Marsh Neighborhood Association. Prairie, with First Baptist Church and Bethany United Methodist Church, will sponsor the monthly neighborhood association dinner gathering scheduled for August 26, 2016 at the Boys and Girls Club. We are planning a Mexican style food meal as an increasing number of neighborhood residents are Hispanic. The social action committee will be asking for help to prepare and serve food and then join residents in eating the meal. Allied Partners is sponsoring up to three scholarships a year for neighborhood kids seeking further education. Allied Partners funds lunches for kids at the Wellness Center in the summer and piloted a job assistance program for about six months.

**Black Lives Matter Movement**—Initiated many actions the week of July 18-22. The group held training for folks interested in participating in planned protests about policing—attended a city council meeting on Tuesday 7/19 to speak out against the Blue Lives Matter bill being discussed. On Wednesday night members of the group briefly occupied the podium at concerts square. On Thursday 7/21 50-60 protestors gathered in front of the police union building on John Nolen Drive and then marched to the intersection of John Nolen and Rimrock Road, where a group of about ten men and women who were reportedly chained together (underneath rubber tubing) sat in the middle of the intersection blocking traffic and waiting to be arrested. The police ended up blocking car traffic from entering the area from all directions: the beltline, John Nolen from Olin Avenue forward, and Rimrock. The protests were peaceful. Many police were present but respectful.

**Mothers Day Breakfast**—Members of the social action committee helped prepare and serve a Mother’s Day Brunch, which is a tradition at the Boys and Girls Club.

—Molly Plunkett.

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## **Historical Tidbits—from Rosemary Dorney**

### **Strolling down memory lane with Prairie . . . .**

#### **Fourth of July at the Davidsons’**

Your Prairie History committee, as it goes through (voluminous) materials related to our Society’s earlier days, is constantly stopping to reminisce. Murmurs of “Oh, I remember that, wasn’t it fun?” or “Yeah, we used to do that every year - now, why was it we stopped?” form a background to our monthly meetings. We thought it might interest some of our more recent Prairieites to hear about a few of these occasions. The annual fourth of July picnic at Davidsons’ was one.

Hermine and Charlie Davidson, founding members, generously handed their lakefront home on Waunona Way over to us every Fourth, for playing, feasting, swimming, and general schmoozing. Charlie and daughter Lilse were avid sailors: the household put its

3-4 watercraft at our disposal, except for the big sailboat which was definitely Charlie's preserve. He happily skippered it around Lake Monona for whoever cared to crew. (Me, me!!)

Prairie had fewer families back then, but often larger ones, so there were a LOT of kids running in and out of the water all day. I do not recall any safety problems ever arising. Then, as now, we watched out for one another. The Davidsons gave us the run of their kitchen. Also, of their (mercifully) three bathrooms, a challenge to locate in their intricately constructed home. Lake Monona algae absolutely HAD to come off before dry clothes again replaced swimsuits!

Each family brought food for a mid-to-late-afternoon meal, eaten communally or individually as a family. We'd build an appetite with swimming and volleyball, then ravenously and impatiently wait for our meal which always seemed ages coming. Hermine had taught athletics in Madison Public Schools for many years, and had, since retiring, lost neither her playing or refereeing skills. Charlie presided over their barbecue; we were free to use Davidsons' or bring our own. Odors of franks, chicken, and burgers tantalized us while cries of "Aw, Mom, isn't it ready YET?" abounded.

One Fourth, we Dorney-Fasts had proudly brought - and plugged in, with Hermine's permission - our brand-new Crock Pot. It was a novelty then, and despite a sign emphatically urging folks NOT to lift the lid to peer inside this strange new critter, many did so. (Hey, no one's gonna tell a Prairie UU not to do something!) That year the Dorney-Fasts ate quite a bit later than planned.

The Davidsons, great nature lovers, had set several purple martin houses high up on poles next to the lake. These birds keep the mosquito population down, making themselves invaluable to waterfront owners. Their flight patterns as they ride wind currents are amazing to behold! A perfect end to a perfect day was provided us as we watched martins, singly and in formation, in never-ending elegant high-to-low-then high-again swoops, pursuing swarms of bugs or just enjoying the breezes. Sometimes we'd get to singing while we sat together in the grass at lake's edge. Others, we just gazed, hypnotized by the martins' grace and accuracy.

But wait! Our holiday was not quite ended. Back in that pre-Convention Center Era, both organizations and shoreline residents would set off fireworks at dusk. We had ideal seats.

So, what's not to like about Fourth of July at Davidsons'? We certainly found it an excellent way to celebrate both our Prairie friendship and the birth of our nation.

by R.M. Dorney

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### **From Pam Gates—Moses Project**

Dane County's criminal justice system has the worst racial disparities in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's criminal justice system has the worst racial disparities in the nation. Solitary confinement, as practiced by Wisconsin's prison system, is considered torture according to international standards.

What are we doing about all this?

By participating in MOSES, an interfaith community-action group, we are striving to change the system. MOSES, which is an affiliate of the statewide group WISDOM, has

for several years, been keeping members informed.

WISDOM task forces work on critical matters such as reducing the use of solitary confinement, reducing the use of "crimeless revocation," release of "old law" prisoners who have completed their sentences, compassionate release of sick or infirm prisoners. These are some of the most prominent concerns in a system which needs overhaul in so many ways.

Join us! MOSES will hold a picnic and concert at a farm near Verona on Saturday, Aug. 27, 1-4 p.m. Come meet the tremendously committed group that is working to change a system that has gotten out of hand. We look forward to seeing you there; contact Pam Gates for details.

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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 at:***

***[wisconsinkaren@gmail.com](mailto:wisconsinkaren@gmail.com)***

