

Prairie Fire

May 2016

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Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

Mon May 1 6:30 p.m.—**Program Committee**—meets

Fri May 5 6:00 p.m.—**Board Game Night**

Sat May 6 5:00 a.m.—**Men's Shelter Breakfast**

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

Sun May 7 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—in the Annex

10:00 a.m.—**Music and the Seven Principles**—Life is full of song! From the top hits on the radio to the melodies of Mother Nature. Come see how music is part of our everyday lives and how it relates to the Seven Principles

11:45 a.m.—The topic at the Humanist Union's meeting will be **The Women's Marches on Washington and Madison**. Photographer Ingrid Laas will provide an illustrated report on the January 21st Women's March on Washington and Barbara Park will report on the Women's March on Madison the same day, where she led the Raging Grannies of Madison, and crowd, in song at the Wisconsin Capitol. We'll meet in the Annex and start with a potluck lunch at 11:45, with the program from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

5:30-7 p.m.—**Men's Group** meets the first Sunday of each month. There will be a potluck followed by discussion

11:45—**Prairie Board**—meets in the Annex

Fri May 13 5:00 p.m.—**Prairie Retreat**—at Bethel Horizons

Sat May 14 8:00 a.m.—**Prairie Retreat**—continues at Bethel Horizons

Sun May 15 8:00 a.m.—**Prairie Retreat**—continues at Bethel Horizons

9:15 a.m.—**Key Log ceremony**—at Bethel Horizons

10:00 a.m.—**Ted Talk**—at Prairie meeting house. Ilona Szabo' de Carvalho—**Four lessons I learned from taking a stand against drugs and gun violence**

6:30 p.m.—**Spanish Speakers Potluck**—The meeting will take place at the home of Scott Freeman and Cassi Neff, 404 S. Blount Street #401. All levels of Spanish are welcome. Bring a dish to pass if convenient—if not, come anyway! Call Scott at (913) 707-1408 for directions; or call Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382 for more information or to arrange a ride

Sun May 21 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—in the Annex

10:00 a.m.—**The Corruption of Our Democracy**—by Re. Chris Taylor. The Congregational Study Action Issue (CSAI) for 2016-2020 on *The Corruption of Our Democracy*

challenges us to reconsider how we understand, participate and engage in democratic living. It is a call to envision our role as a faith community to promote a societal ethos that affirms dignity for all, that takes responsibility for the human role in ecological disaster, and an openness to rethink our use of political power and production of wealth.

11:45 a.m.—**Soup Sunday**

Sun May 28 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—in the Annex

10:00 a.m.—**Transition Sunday**

Musings from the Minister—Sandra Ingham

Most of you know that I am somewhat obsessed with the Southwest and hiking in that area of the country. I am very thankful that I can make these trips. They are sacred journeys for me; the desert is where I find spirituality, when I have my church experiences. Hiking is my “Sunday morning service” time where I find meaning and beauty and a sense of things much bigger than myself. These wanderings have been essential to my mental health and my overall well-being. As John Muir wrote, “I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.”

My next trip to the Southwest is supposed to be May 3-24. But, whether or not this trip is going to happen is in question. My plan was to spend the last week at the North Rim of Grand Canyon—that is, until there was a rock slide a few weeks ago which destroyed or damaged over 300 water pipes. Now there is no water at the North Rim...all reservations between May 15 and at least May 26 have been cancelled.

Then there is my ongoing upper respiratory problem which has kept me from doing anything remotely athletic or physically challenging for weeks. I’m pretty sure that I can get to the bottom of Grand Canyon, but not so sure about the climbing-out part. Perhaps I could start a Unitarian Universalist congregation at Phantom Ranch, as the “lodge”, cabins and dormitories at the bottom are collectively known! To add to the uncertainty, the federal government may shut down, beginning May 1. The last time that happened, the federal parks were closed.

A close friend once told me that I had an amazing ability to be in the moment. I remember being puzzled by this comment, though I took it as a compliment. I knew very little about Buddhism at that point in my life, so I couldn’t congratulate myself for my successful adherence to that philosophy. Living in the moment has its positive aspects, such as not worrying about what might happen next. So I should not be anxious and stressed about what is going to happen with my trip. Plus, I have probably had more than my fair share of experiences in southwestern national parks, thus I shouldn’t be complaining.

Except that I am complaining, even whining...to miss one of my sacred times in the desert is a depressing thought, even though I fully expect to have more desert time in the next few years. I hope that part of my life is not over quite yet...and there is a subject for another column, some other month—letting go, something that we do throughout our lives, possibly often without even realizing that we are letting go of something; childhood comes to mind. For now, I shall attempt to tap into that Buddhist part of myself and live in the moment, at least for the next few days. (Note that if I am gone in May, I will, as usual, check email and voice mail regularly, except for May 8-14.)

May you successfully find your positive Buddhist moments too...Rev. Sandy

Message from the President—Gary Gates

New chairs for the Meeting House will soon be here!

The decision to order the chairs did not follow Prairie's normal thorough discussion process. We had been trying out different styles of possible replacement chairs, and most people who had tried them agreed on the style they liked best.

Then the manufacturer advised us that the style we liked was going to be discontinued in one week. Individuals involved in the process felt the selected style was so good and new chairs were so badly needed that they were willing to pay for the chairs if we submitted the order.

With the pledges available now and no money in the budget if we procrastinated, it seemed prudent to proceed post-haste to get the chairs people said they liked.

I hope the comfort of the chairs will make up for any frustration you may feel about not having had more time to discuss the issue.

Frankly, I am comforted by the thought that we have avoided a long discussion. I feel there are far more important things we need to spend our time discussing.

We will be exploring other possible remodeling changes at the Retreat and at the Parish Meeting. We are considering many changes and the best way to prioritize them. If there are specific changes you want to see, I encourage you to make pledges to make them happen.

Circle of Friends—Holly Tellander, Director RE

Wrapping up in RE!

Hard to believe another year is almost over! Time flies when you are having fun, and we have a lot of fun learning together.

As I shared in last month's *Prairie Fire*, there are some big changes underfoot for next year. We will be moving toward an all-ages, choice-driven workshop model for grades K-7/8 (older kids will choose where they would be most comfortable) and a film-based discussion course entitled *Popcorn Theology* for our 7/8th graders and up. You'll hear more about both of these program plans at the Transitions Ceremony on Sunday, May 28th. We hope you'll join us then because you'll also get a chance to check out a little demonstration from each of the RE classes on the things they learned and the projects they completed this past year. It will be a really great celebration of the community of learners you help support at Prairie.

Summer Programming—Ready for FUN?

We are already gearing up for Summer Fun at Prairie—last year we had record attendance and participation!

Each summer Sunday students can choose between two workshop choices that will help them to engage with our UU values & principles, our six sources, or involve them with issues of social justice.

Many of you volunteered to help out last summer, finding the time to impart their particular passions and interests with our students. Prairie is currently growing the next generation of UUs (who have a big job before them!) and we all have special gifts to impart. Spending time with children is much the same as contributing to a retirement account—little bits along the way add up to big dividends in the end!

If you are interested in volunteering this summer for a day or two or three or more, please contact me and I'll help you flesh out your ideas—or even give you a fully formed idea for you to run with!

Extra Summer Fun!

Pontoon Porch! Keep an eye on the calendar and website—we've already begun planning our 2nd Annual Pontoon Porch Excursion—you do not want to miss that!

Camping trip! Prairie RE is planning it's second (semi) annual Fall Camping Trip! Look for more information to come soon—tentative date is the third weekend in September. Please contact Holly Tellander with any input you have as the planning for this fun event gets underway!

SAVE THE DATES

The first-ever “Madison-Area UU Read” will be Sunday, June 4. The book we will discuss is The Third Reconstruction by William Barber. Get your books and become part of what your Social Action Committee hopes will become a tradition—UU Reads. We will probably meet at First Unitarian Society at 6:00 p.m.; details to be confirmed as soon as possible.

June 11—We will celebrate the 95th Anniversary of the Flower Ceremony first held in Prague in what we now call the Czech Republic. Although the actual anniversary is June 4, we will happily keep the celebration going for another week. What flowers will you bring to share? Details in the June newsletter.

Remodeling Update

The remodeling planning group and the Board have developed a list of improvements to our building that we think would make a big difference to our ability to use and enjoy our building. We are proposing that we focus first on remodeling the meeting room and a couple of smaller items. In a nutshell, here is what we are considering for a first phase of remodeling and why.

Goals for the meeting hall: Increased seating, improved comfort, safety and accessibility, better acoustics, more beautiful space.

What changes will get us there:

- new chairs with supportive padded backs
- remove ceiling asbestos, new 6" dropped ceiling with acoustical tile
- mounted projector and screen with wiring in the ceiling
- remove stage and office to enlarge room and put piano on ground level, add portable risers for height where needed
- exchange wood paneling for drywall and light colored paint
- improve sound barrier to kitchen
- wider doors to meeting hall that swing out (no central pillar)
- window treatments to allow darkening
- replace large radiators with smaller baseboard radiators

Other changes we are considering for early implementation:

- add commercial dishwasher and water softener
- take out wall to combine two smallest downstairs classrooms
- create solid wall for class with accordion doors, create double or barn doors to central space, maintain ability to divide into two classrooms
- expand the downstairs bath to make it accessible

Farther down the road, we plan to rework the upstairs bathrooms to create 1-2 accessible baths, add air-conditioning to the meeting hall, increase size of the opening between the kitchen and foyer (AKA narthex,) create another window in the narthex/foyer, brighter wall surface for the narthex. Consider moving the kitchen wall west or create bay to east to expand narthex.

We will be discussing these and other ideas at the Retreat at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, 5/13 and at the Parish meeting on Sunday 5/21. It is not intended that a final decision will be made on proceeding until sometime this fall. This would have to be preceded by a capital fund raising drive. We are looking for a general sense of the congregation as to whether there is sufficient support to make it worthwhile to continue with the planning. Please join us for the discussions!

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