

Prairie Fire

June 2017

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Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

Fri Jun 2 6:00 p.m.—**Board Game Night**

Sat Jun 3 5:00 a.m.—**Menn's Shelter Breakfast**

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

Sun Jun 4 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—in the Annex

10:00 a.m.—**Sidney and God**—In honor of Prairie's 50th anniversary The Prairie Players will be staging a revival of the play *Sidney and God*

11:45 a.m.—**Board**—meets in the Meeting House

12:00 noon—**Humanist Union Picnic at Parks**—In place of our regular monthly meeting for June, the Humanist Union event on Sunday, June 4th will be a picnic at the home of Barb and Bob Park at 5610 Hammersley Road from noon to 2:30 p.m. It will be a fund raiser for the low power radio station which broadcasts the Humanist Union programs. Barb and Bob will provide the food and drink and Barb (as the station's treasurer) will accept the donations. Please RSVP to Barb at barbpark@gmail.com so they know how much food to buy. The goal is for the Humanist Union of Madison to be listed as a sponsoring organization on the Sponsor Page of the station's website.

5:30 p.m.—**Prairie Men's Group**—meets until 7:00 p.m. Potluck followed by discussion

6:30-8:30 p.m.—**The Third Reconstruction, Fusion Politics and the Rise of a New Justice Movement**—by The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber III and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. This is the UUAs "common read." The discussion will happen at James Reeb UU Society. Suggested by Pam Gates and the Prairie Social Action Committee

Mon Jun 5 6:30 p.m.—**Program Committee**—meets in the Annex

Sun Jun 11 8:45 a.m.—**Choir Rehearsal**—in the Annex

10:00 a.m.—**The Power of a Flower**—Yes, there is such a thing, though you may scoff at the notion or dismiss it as some hippy-dippy idea from the '60s. The Flower Ceremony that many of our Unitarian Universalist congregations commemorate today was first celebrated 95 years ago in June of 1922, in the largest Unitarian church in the world at that time: the Unitarian Church in Prague, Czechoslovakia. The minister of that church at that time was Norbert Capek whose life we will review on this Sunday. Hard to believe, but Prairie has not had a Flower Ceremony since June of 2014, three years ago! What better time to revisit the ceremony than at the same time when many UU congregations around the world will be noting this remarkable anniversary? Flowers can be a symbol of defiance; a celebration of differences; a "shout out" for

hope in an increasingly dark world; a reminder that there is much beauty in our world. ***Please remember to bring a flower (or flowers) today!!***

Tues Jun 13 2:00 p.m.—**History Committee**—meets in the Annex

Sun Jun 18 10:00 a.m.—**Service TBA**

11:30 a.m.—**Soup Sunday**

12:00 p.m.—the June Book Club selection is —**A Man Called Ove**—by Fredrik Backman, suggested by Al Nettleton, 337 pages

Sun Jun 25 10:00 a.m.—**Offering Wrap Up**—It has been a little over a year since we implemented sharing our offering with charities and Kathy Converse will report on the impact of our contributions

Musings from the Minister—Sandra Ingham

Recently, the History Committee asked me to write an article for the Prairie History Book they are compiling. Did you know that there *is* a History Committee here at Prairie? It is an *ad hoc* committee which has been working long and hard in anticipation of the commemoration of Prairie's 50th anniversary that officially occurs on September 17, 2017. The members of the Committee are Ruth Calden, Rosemary Dorney, Mary Mullen and Barb Park, with lots of help from many other volunteers.

Writing that article took longer than I expected, perhaps because I was writing it in “real time”, unlike my predecessors at Prairie who had the wisdom of hindsight when recalling their Prairie experiences. I wanted what I have to share about Prairie to reflect what is happening *right now* and to be as honest as possible, complete with current strengths and weaknesses. When you read the article, I hope that is what you find.

It probably won't surprise anyone, because I say this repeatedly, that I believe one of the main struggles we have as an organization is *communicating* well. We could do a much better job of *listening* to each other. (Please note that I think this is true of humans in general, including myself!) For this to happen effectively, there must be a high level of trust—and openness—within the organization and among its members. But before trust comes respect.

To live up to the highest standards of Unitarian Universalism this trust and respect should extend to our organization's relationship with its staff. Concerns, questions, criticisms, suggestions, compliments are all valid pieces of information to share with each other and with staff. To become an open-minded, open-hearted faith community, though, all relevant parties must be present when such discussions take place.

Speaking now, specifically to the subject of professional ministry, nothing is to be gained—except an erosion of trust and respect—by having conversations that affect the minister when the minister is not present. Absolutely, though, there should be ongoing discussions within a church/fellowship/society about leadership, in general, and ministry, in particular. Another way to phrase this is that there should of course be a process to evaluate the minister (and other staff members). To reach that goal, the Board has spent many extra hours “above and beyond the call of duty” working on Prairie's policies and procedures. The current Board members (until June 30) are Gary Gates, Karen Deaton, Anne Urbanski, Kathy Converse, Judy Lazarus, John Richards and Kim Tedesco.

Another means of evaluating the minister is through the Committee on Ministry (COM). Did you know that there *is* such a committee here at Prairie? The current members of this Committee are Dawn Hayslett, Heidi Hughes and Cheryl Robinson. This Committee welcomes your feedback about the minister (*no* anonymous comments, please). According to Prairie's Policies and Procedures, the COM is charged with doing annual reviews/evaluations of the minister, with the Board's input. Every three years, the evaluation is to be an in-depth one with as many people in the congregation surveyed as possible.

There is another, more obvious, option for giving feedback to your minister. *Talk to me; share your concerns and suggestions directly with me.* We may decide that we would like to have other voices and opinions be part of the conversation, at which point we would then meet with the COM. We are all here to help support and enhance better communication within the Prairie community.

Happy start of summer to all of you!

Rev. Sandy.

Message from the President—Gary Gates

When the Social Action Committee suggested to the Board that Prairie consider becoming a Lockers for the Homeless site, my first thought was that we needed input from the congregation and from the neighbors. The Board agreed that there were likely to be concerns, and that we needed to hear them before taking action.

The Social Action Committee has now surveyed the nearby neighbors and found that approximately half had no objections or a positive reaction. Predictably, others were negative. The Social Action Committee also held a session at the Spring Retreat for an in-depth discussion of the issue, and most of the people there indicated support, although questions and concerns were expressed.

I was delighted to hear Mary Frantz's suggestion that when our guests were selected we host a reception to welcome them. Another member then suggested that we invite our neighbors to the reception also. To me, this would be Prairie at its best.

Finally, it was brought up for discussion at the Parish Meeting. Again, most people seemed favorable, even though questions and concerns were expressed. I was struck by one comment that we should not go ahead until we had unanimous support from the neighborhood. When did unanimity become a requirement for helping those who are in need?

While all questions raised will be considered by the Board, obviously not all issues and concerns can be answered before we go ahead. My inclination now is to recommend to the Board that they approve the idea and ask the Housing and Property Committee, with the assistance of the Social Action Committee, to work with the Providers on location and implementation.

I know issues will need to be resolved as we implement this concept, but if we wait for all issues to be resolved, we will never do anything.

Circle of Friends—Holly Tellander, Director RE

Looking ahead—

Summer programming—Our summer program runs much like a thematic day camp experience. Each Summer Sunday is a chance for our kids to engage with our Principles, our Sources, our UU identity and our commitment to Social Justice. It's a great time to 'get your feet wet' in RE if you've been considering it from afar. Program planning is happening now, but if you have any great ideas or passion projects you'd like to share—we'd love to help you round them out to share with our kids!

Summer calendars will be out in the next week—look for them on the RE bulletin board, the website and on the Prairie News Group.

A sampling of activities we've planned and folks who've offered to help:

1. Dichotomous Keys with Doughnuts & Trees! (Sources/Science—with help from Karen Deaton!)
2. Reverse Painting—A different Perspective (Our UU Identity—with help from Kathy Converse)
3. Team Building Ski Challenge—(Principles/Everyone is important—with help from Carl Wacker)

Survey! At the end of each RE year we ask for your feedback in the form of a survey. This year, in addition to our parent survey, we will also be offering up a survey for those who don't have kids on our program. We hope to get an idea of what obstacles you might see to volunteering in the program and great ideas you'd like to see included. Please keep an eye out on the front table and the Prairie News Group in the next few weeks to take part in this important dialogue.

Next year—The RE committee and I will be spending time this summer continuing the process of transition to a new RE model—a workshop-based, multi-age experience for our students. We've utilized feedback we've gotten from parents and students to reflect on questions such as 'what works!' and 'What doesn't?' We are committed to increasing growth and participation through a continued reflection and redefinition of our objectives and, if necessary, a restructuring of our methods.

This year, as we wrap up our first 50 years with a celebration this summer, seems like a great time to consider these new changes and perspectives. A new format might better serve our changing demographics, our evolving needs and our developing student interests and capabilities.

In the coming months we will continue to share our insights and findings as we continue to research this new, exciting possibility. And again, I invite you to join this conversation in whatever capacity you feel compelled, if indeed you find yourself so moved.

We are always happy to hear your comments, ideas and questions.

From Barb Park

After June 11, the choir will be taking their Summer break until September.

The choir has had a wonderful stretch singing this year, especially since we had the opportunity to work with Amber Bruns on her five song cycle "Nature, the Gentlest Mother."

The choir sang three of the pieces and the other songs were sung by Rachel Long and Lynn Currie. It is always a treat to be able to work directly with the composer and this was the premier of this music so it was a real privilege. Everyone has worked hard this year and the result is an ever improving sound. What a great group of singers!

If you have a secret desire to sing in the choir, and can carry a tune, consider joining the choir next fall. Talk to Barb Park if you are interested. There is even an opportunity to sing with the choir as we prepare our final ‘offering’ before our summer break. We will be practicing our last song on Sunday mornings—May 28, June 4 and June 11. We rehearse at 8:45 on Sunday mornings in the Annex. Feel free to come and join us.

Sidney and God—a one-act play—returns by popular demand

In 1997 Douglas Muder, a UU who writes for the *UU World* magazine, wrote a short story called “Sidney and God” which he posted to an online UU discussion group. A synopsis: While sitting on a park bench Sidney, an older man, meets God—who appears to him as a raffish but philosophical senior citizen. They discuss the meaning of life, the universe, and everything, and Sidney comes away from the encounter perhaps a tad less confused about his role in it all. With Muder’s permission, Anne Urbanski adapted his story into a one-act play, which was performed at Prairie in October, 1998, starring Al Nettleton as the minister and narrator, Warren Hagstrom as Sidney, and George Calden as God. Prairie’s June 4 service will be a reprise of SIDNEY AND GOD. Though the cast will be somewhat different, the message remains the same.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES:

June 4, Madison-area UUs first “Common Read”, 6:00, at James Reeb UU Society. We will discuss William Barber’s book, [The Third Reconstruction](#). Everyone welcome! *June 21-25*, our Association’s annual General Assembly (GA), in New Orleans. (Rev. Sandy will be gone the week of June 19-26 for the annual Ministry Days and then GA.) *July 23*, Annual Joint Service with the Free Congregation of Sauk County, followed by a potluck picnic.

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