

# Prairie Fire



April 2018

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## Prairie Calendar

(See descriptions of programs below)

**Sun Apr 1** 8:45 am—**Choir rehearsal** in Annex

10:00 am—**No Fooling!**—I am a committed Humanist. I am a committed Humanist with a strong Christian background. Easter often baffles me. I want to celebrate this most important of Christian events, but not totally the way that I celebrated it as a child. I sometimes do this by celebrating the beginning of spring. There are mystery and wonder, awe and sacredness, laughter and tears, sorrow and joy in both events. And I wonder—am I leaning towards the Religious Humanist end of the spectrum now, rather than the Secular Humanist end, where I have been hanging out for years? No Fooling! Rev. Sandy

11:45 am—**Anti-Intellectualism in America: The War on Science**—will be Susan Hagstrom's topic at this meeting of the Humanist Union. We will meet in the Annex, starting with our usual potluck lunch at 11:45 followed by Susan's program from 12:30 to 1:30.

**Mon Apr 2** 7:00 pm—**Program Committee**—meets in the Annex

**Fri Apr 6** 6:00 pm—**Board Game Night**

**Sat Apr 7** 5:00 am—**Men's Shelter Breakfast**

10:00 am—**Prairie WOW**—meets in the Annex

**Sun Apr 8** 8:45 am—**Choir rehearsal** in the Annex

10:00 am—**Incarceration and Return to Community**—Artist John Mix, a retired Dane County Jail chaplain and MOSES activist, will discuss with us the critical issues of mass incarceration and our criminal justice system. At least one previously incarcerated community member will participate as well. This forum is in conjunction with the portrait exhibit on display at Prairie during April.

11:45 am—**Board**—meets in the Annex

**Sun Apr 15** 8:45 am—**Choir rehearsal** in the Annex

10:00 am—**Alphabet Soup-or- How Do You Spell UUA?**—Rev. Sandy will attempt to guide you through the thicket of acronyms and seemingly-meaningless-letters-strung-

together that describe the work of our Association. Long-time Unitarian Universalists tend to throw out terms and letters as if everyone knew what we were talking about. For example, I subscribe to the CLF newsletter. Do you? Or, at GA this year, I might go to that UUPCC meeting, but I'm afraid that it conflicts with both the APF one and the UUADP one. You're not sure that you care about any of this? I think you will care partly because you help support this alphabet soup mixture, but also because you might be surprised at the breadth and depth and range of what we UUs believe is important and worthy of our attention. It'll make you proud to be a UU!

11:30 am—**Soup Sunday**

12:00 noon—**Manhattan Beach**—This book by Jennifer Egan opens in Brooklyn during the Great Depression. Anna Kerrigan, nearly twelve years old, accompanies her father to the house of a man who, she gleans, is crucial to the survival of her father and her family. Anna observes the uniformed servants, the lavishing of toys...After *Soup Sunday* the Prairie Book Club will meet in the Annex to discuss this book. The book club is open to everyone and you do not have to have read the book to attend.

**Sun Apr 22** 8:45 am—**Choir rehearsal** in the Annex

10:00 am—**Service**—Katherine Liu will be a presenter for another of the programs put together by our 9-12 RE class. Look for more information to come.

**Sun Apr 29** 8:45 am—**Choir rehearsal** in the Annex

10:00 am—**Louisa May Alcott**—by Amber Bruns. This will be the perfect introduction to watching “Little Women” on PBS’s Masterpiece coming in May. Amber always has interesting insights for per presentations.

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## **Musings From The Minister**

Did you know that this year’s theme is the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)? Wait. What? Theme for what? Our annual dance? No, we don’t have one of those, at least not at the moment. Prairie’s Program Committee discovered when it wrapped up that theme on February 11. In the Congregational Response time, several of you indicated that you were unaware that the Program Committee often has a theme that runs through several of the services it plans for the year.

So, we want you to know that this year’s theme is the UUA. People are generally a little fuzzy when it comes to knowing what the UUA does. Did you know that part of what you pledge to Prairie goes to pay our annual dues to the Unitarian Universalist Association? The UUA is amazingly multi-faceted, supporting many programs, special-interest groups, and affiliations that cover a wide range of interests, social justice issues, professional groups, publishing houses, to name a few areas.

Over the years, there has been a fair amount of tension between congregations and the UUA. Two factors have a lot to do with this: our grounding in congregational polity and our being freethinkers. We might just be the most reluctant group of people ever to try to organize ourselves institutionally. On many occasions, I have wondered, “Why do we even bother?”

On the other hand, there is much to be said for banding together, however loosely. Most individual congregations are too small to accomplish much in the wider world, whether we are talking about having a lobbyist at the United Nations—and, yes, we do have such a person—or having the resources to do effective marketing and public relations.

During the coming months, we will have several services devoted to various aspects of the UUA—of which there are many. Here are just a few possibilities: CLF, UUCSJ, UUACCC, LREDA, HUUMANISTS, UUWF, UUUNO, UUSC, UUJA, UUWORLD. The Program Committee works hard to make Sunday mornings interesting, challenging, actually fun—I rarely miss a Program Committee meeting—for the fun, yes, and the occasional treats, of course, but mostly because of the challenge of bringing you consistently good programming.

A gentle reminder...the Program Committee, like all of Prairie's committees, is always looking for a few good women and men. Consider joining us—being a Program Committee member will keep you young at heart and mentally nimble!

HAPPY SPRING,

Rev. Sandy

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

### **The theme for April is EQUITY.**

Prairie RE is first and foremost about **building community**. It's about meeting the needs of our students and families and providing programming that provides support and enrichment. There are **four main pillars of our program**, three as consistently requested by parents and families in surveys collected at the end of each RE year, and the fourth a new addition this year to address the needs of our community of learners.

#### **These pillars are:**

- 1) Unitarian Universalist Identity**
- 2) Social Justice Work**
- 3) World Faith Literacy**
- 4) Social Emotional Learning**

#### **Every single one of our workshops ties in to one or more of these program pillars.**

We've had so many folks come down and share their gifts with our students and families. It's been a real treat to see the new connections made.

#### **What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?**

This year I have made it a top priority to incorporate more social-emotional learning skills into Prairie's programming. This is for several reasons: one being an observed need for more structure in creating a safe and welcoming community for all students and volunteers who choose to spend time in Prairie RE: another being how well SEL meshes with UU values!

Social Emotional Learning is defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as the set of skills necessary for kids (and people in general!!) to find success in the following areas: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

SEL is becoming more and more prevalent in public schools as research continues to show that educating the 'whole child' is the best way to educate. It's an exciting new field in education and I encourage you to keep an eye out for it in the news—these skills have the potential to change all classrooms, and by extension our society, for the better!

I'm very passionate about this subject and would be happy to discuss it further with anyone interested! As you may remember, I am currently pursuing a Breathe For Change Wellness Champion Certification—this certification covers yoga, mindfulness and social emotional learning skills that can be directly used to impact students and families in educational settings. I have already begun to implement some of these strategies with Prairie RE students. Reach out to schedule a time to talk further.

### **Questions? Comments?**

I love dialogue—especially when it concerns education, social justice, Prairie kids or creating exciting new learning experiences. If you have questions, comments or concerns, please reach out and schedule a time to have a conversation. We are stronger together and your voice is important—be sure to share it with the folks who are working hard to create the best programming possible!

### **COMING SOON! MYSTERY FRIENDS!!—April 15th 11:30—1:30 P.M.**

For those of you who joined us for Mystery Friends last year—you remember how fun it is! Just like last year, this year's celebration is a bit different than in years past. Instead of a month-long letter exchange, we'll instead have a fun afternoon together on **Sunday, April 15th**. You'll be matched with a Mystery Friend and get a chance to complete some fun tasks together to get to know each other better! Games, lunch and making new friends? What could be more fun than that? **PLEASE EMAIL ME ASAP IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BEING A MYSTERY FRIEND THIS YEAR! SPECIAL TREATS ON THE SPECIAL DAY!**

## **How can you get involved in RE?**

So. Many. Ways.

Whether teaching a workshop or series, or just coming down to hang out and learn with us—all are always welcome.

Spending time downstairs is a great way to see how we are meeting the needs of our changing world and inspiring the next generation of socially motivated and connected kids—one cool experience at a time!

### **This is how we change the world, folks!**

**The next generation needs you to show up and share your wisdom!**

**And with our new format—it is easier than ever 😊**

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”~Winston Churchill

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## **Renovation Capital Fund Drive**

After service March 25th, we kicked off our Capital Fund Drive to renovate our main building. Several speakers made their case for the changes we want to make, and some put their message in writing.

John Wunderlin says, “I first attended a Prairie service over 20 years ago when we lived in Mineral Point and were looking for a UU congregation to attend with our young children.

*I don't remember the service or who was presenting, but the meeting hall left a strong impression with me. I know some members have good memories in this space, but my impression of the facilities was that it hadn't been updated in many decades and I was left feeling that it wasn't the right place for us. As a result, we spent our first 15 years attending First Unitarian, even though it made our already long drive substantially farther than if we had joined Prairie at that time. The dark, stuffy, 50s style of the meeting hall was a strong deterrent for us then, and I suspect it continues to cause visitors to look elsewhere today. It's time to bring Prairie's facilities into the 21st century."*

Al Nettleton explained that we must act to remove the asbestos from our building, because if it gets into the air it has the potential to cause the cancer mesothelioma. Tom Robinson described the benefits of installing a "T loop" system so that persons with hearing impairment would have the option of connecting their hearing aid to our sound system. Penny Eiler emphasized the importance of an up-to-date projector and screen, especially for outside speakers.

Martin Arnold shocked some of us with his measurements of high carbon dioxide in our meeting room by the end of our services, speaking to the need for a good ventilation system, as well as air conditioning and updating the heating system. Gary Gates described the hours of volunteer time spent in clean up that would be dramatically reduced, if only we could install a commercial dishwasher. Jesse Garst passionately advocated for us to live up to our aspirations to be welcoming by creating a gender-free bathroom accessible to those in wheelchairs, transgender people, and those needing assistance from someone of another gender.

Karen Deaton said *"I'm here on behalf of the Religious Education program to tell you about the four improvements we request. 1) The downstairs bathroom is tiny and ugly, with chronic staining from condensation or leaks on one wall. Some children are even frightened to go in there. We want a more attractive bathroom. It is important for the bathroom to be fully accessible so we can welcome people who use wheelchairs to participate downstairs. 2) The accordion wall does not block sound, so we want a regular wall dividing the main space, with large double doors to open up for events like Nifty Gifty. 3) A child-height sink and water fountain would let our little people be more independent in our space. 4) A second electrical outlet in each room would be safer and more convenient because we'd be using fewer extension cords. With these four improvements, our space can be as welcoming and effective as our programming."*

Rachel covered plans to change the doors between the foyer and the meeting room to improve traffic flow, and plans to enlarge the foyer to increase our fellowship space and comfort. See the summary of the main renovations planned in this Prairie Fire and posted at Prairie.

Working with our architect and a builder, we received a rough estimate of what these renovations would cost, and used this estimate to set our fund raising goal.

We hope to raise \$275,000 in pledges during this Capital Fund Drive. Please consider carefully what you can contribute to make Prairie's main building more beautiful, welcoming, comfortable, functional, safe and accessible. It is important not to reduce your annual giving to Prairie's operating budget, so we are asking you to pledge above and beyond your usual generous giving. If needed, you can spread out your gift to the Capital Fund over two or even three years. See the pledge form in this Prairie Fire, and expect a call to ask what you can pledge. Check out our church graphic posted in the foyer to track our

fund-raising progress. Once we determine how much our congregation can raise for this project, we will work with our architect to develop specific plans and bring a proposal to the Spring Parish Meeting for a vote authorizing us to proceed.

## **WHAT RENOVATIONS ARE WE PLANNING?**

We want a space that is more beautiful, welcoming, comfortable, functional, safe and accessible. Here are the changes we are planning.

### **Meeting Hall**

- Remove the stage, partial wall and office to enlarge the room and allow folks with physical limitations access to the front of the room. Add movable risers as needed for height
- Remove the asbestos ceiling
- New ceiling with improved acoustics and lighting
- Mounted projector and screen
- Improved sound system
- Remove paneling, add drywall and paint
- New window trim and treatments
- New door (hinged out, with safety windows) to Meeting Hall
- Remodel opening from Meeting Hall to kitchen
- New flooring
- Improved ventilation, heating, and air conditioning

### **Kitchen**

- New commercial dishwasher
- Enlarged opening to narthex (foyer)
- New counters, cabinet update

### **Narthex** (Foyer)

- Drywall and painting
- More windows
- Add bump out/bay to east
- New accessible bathroom

### **RE Space**

- Improved and expanded accessible bath
- Solid walls in place of accordion walls, with double doors for large entry
- Add lower height hand-washing sink and water fountain in central space (v)
- Electrical Improvements

**Pledge form for the Capital Campaign 2018 to remodel Prairie’s main building**

Your pledge is matched dollar for dollar by a generous Prairie Member

**Background to remodel Prairie’s main building**—Discussions to remodel Prairie’s main building have been going on for the past decade. There are even architectural drawings from 2009 showing various configurations to expand the meeting room, foyer, and kitchen, as well as reshape space into offices and bathrooms. Then, in 2013, the house next door became available. As you know, Prairie bought and remodeled it beautifully to add meeting rooms, religious education space, a backyard, and offices that we all use joyfully on a daily basis.

In the last few years, once more talk has increased as various upgrade and maintenance needs have become pressingly more apparent for the main building. Here are some examples.

*Remember when the projector screen fell from the meeting room ceiling which couldn’t be easily replaced because of asbestos (think remediation). Oh, and then, there’s the kitchen crew who are continuously identifying, after each soup Sunday, the need for a larger dishwasher when they spend hours Sunday afternoons cleaning up. Well, and let’s not forget our Religious Educators who string extension cords around the basement space and struggle to be heard over the noise from adjacent classrooms.*

*Also, many of us watch with fear, as folks with walkers negotiate the stairs onto the stage or members struggle with heavy tables to replace them in the stage closet. Oh, and what about the crazy doors between the foyer and meeting room that abruptly bump and bruise friendly folks on the other side or swing freely at inopportune times, when someone is coming through with coffee or in a walker.*

*And what about the needed modifications we do not readily see, like the buildup of carbon dioxide that makes us drowsy and should be ventilated; nor readily feel, as when the summer heat compels us to close the windows and shades to conserve the building’s cool air, buildup CO2. Just think how air conditioning could perk us up and gently ventilate the air and cool us.*

*Last, but not least are the bathrooms, which are not welcoming to people in wheelchairs nor to transgender people*

In the fall of 2016, a small, informal group met with an architect to generally discuss rough plans and timelines. That group evolved in the Spring of 2017 with the help of the board into the Remodel Planning Group (RPG), chaired by Rachel Long and Martin Arnold. Additional RPG members include Heidi Hughes, Jim Lyne, Al Nettleton, Tom Robison, and John Wunderlin, who asked for and received input from Religious Education, Housing and Property, Hospitality, Programming and other committees and groups within Prairie to identify needs and build a wish list.

The RPG met with architect Todd Barnett and Bauer Raether Builders, who are experienced in church renovations, to make estimates of what the wish list would cost. Rachel and Martin asked the board for direction on how RPG should proceed. With the board’s blessing, RPG then discussed with Prairie members at the May 2017 retreat and at the May 2017 parish meeting to say, “This is how we are starting to think about remodeling.” Again, in September, the RPG met with interested members to discuss the plans once more. Finally, at a special Parish meeting on October 1, the board and RPG committee formally asked the Parish to proceed and authorized a modest amount to develop architectural plans.

So, now, Spring of 2018, we ask you to pledge to this remodeling project. The cost currently stands at \$275,000.

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**Your Pledge is matched dollar for dollar by a generous Prairie Member**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**I pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Capital Campaign** to remodel Prairie’s main building which will be matched dollar for dollar by a generous Prairie member. Please return this form to Prairie in April to allow the RPG to further prepare to bring the remodeling plans back to the May 2018 Parish meeting for a **final go forward vote**. Your funds should then become available in the summer or fall to allow the RPG to start in the summer.

Mail to: Prairie UU Society, Cap Campaign, 2010 Whenona Dr., Madison 53711

## **Vote Coming on State Legislative Action Network**

“When you are out there fixing the world, it’s good to have help.” (Donald Skinner, UUWorld, 1/3/11. Many states have organized networks of UU congregations and individuals interested in social justice.

At the May Annual Meeting, the Social Justice Committee will ask Prairie Society members to vote on joining a Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist Social Action Network. (WUUSAN for now, anyway).

Wisconsin has an organizing group that has been meeting for close to two years, and has had active involvement by representatives from congregations around the state. Molly Plunkett and Rev. Sandy have attended organizing meetings for Prairie, as have representatives from the other Madison UU congregations.

Many other states have organized social action networks, including Minnesota (“Moosejaw”), Iowa and Michigan. The groups are made up of volunteers from member congregations within the state. They identify critical social justice needs within their states and coordinate action to advance an agenda—which could be through legislative change or fundraising. The goal is to get UU voices heard in the public arena.

The Wisconsin group will elect a Board of Directors who will meet on a regular basis and every year there will be an Annual Meeting where all member congregations and individuals can attend and vote on issues. There will be membership fees for congregations to fund a part-time Communications/Administrative position.

We think active membership in a network can help attract new congregants who see the work being done by this UU organization.

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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 Gary Gates for more information at:***

***[gig.gts@gmail.com](mailto:gig.gts@gmail.com)***