

Prairie Fire

May 2018 Special Edition

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Upcoming Services

Sunday, May 20, 2018 10:00 a.m. “RE-Visioned: Changing RE Trends Here and in the wider UU Community,” by Holly Tellander, DRE.

In this service we will take a look at how the workshop model has been implemented this year at Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. We will learn why many Unitarian Universalist congregations are turning to the workshop model and learn more about how this model can serve our congregational goals. There will be time for questions and feedback with the Director of Religious Education and other members of the Religious Education Committee.

Sunday, May 27, 2018 10:00 a.m. “Memories Are Made of This,” by Rev. Sandra Ingham.

Memory is a fascinating subject. Memory is subjective, unreliable, open to different interpretations. No matter our age, we all have moments of frustration when we can't remember something. We fear the possibility of increasing memory loss as we age. We are anxious when we see signs of this in those nearest and dearest to us who are getting older. Personal memory and public memory have traits in common. Public memory is cursed with the disease of "presentism". What better time than Memorial Day Weekend to remember those who came before us as we ponder how conceited we, the living, are when it comes to making memories.

Announcement

SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 28, from 7-9, for a book presentation at First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. The book is We Rise to Resist: Voices from a New Era in Women's Political Action. "I'm not giving up -- and neither should you" became the mantra for women everywhere who were deeply disappointed in the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. One result were the marches by huge numbers of angry people on January 21, 2017, motivated by the fact that a misogynist had been elected President of the United States. Another result is We Rise to Resist. Thirty-six resisters have contributed essays and interviews to this work, including a former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice, an award-winning female theologian, a New Mexico assistant Attorney General and a naturalized Muslim-American. And, Prairie's own Rev. Sandy had the honor of writing the last essay in the book to wrap it all up. Please join her on June 28th to celebrate the publication of this inspiring collection!!

Musings from the Minister

SPECIAL EDITION! SPECIAL EDITION!

Due to technical difficulties, changes in an email address, and plain old "human error", the following **important information** was inadvertently omitted from the May 1st edition of "Prairie Fire". So, here is a **special edition** of our newsletter.... as always, you are encouraged to carefully read the newsletter. THANKS! Rev. Sandy

I want to change Prairie, someone recently said to me in an accusatory tone, following an interesting exchange at a Board meeting concerning growth. Growth can be a surprisingly complex subject for congregations. During my twenty-plus years of ministry, I have always assumed that every congregation wants to grow. Oh, there might be a rare one out there that doesn't want to grow (numerically -- remember there are other kinds of growth), but surely all congregations want to at least maintain their membership levels, don't they? By that I mean taking in enough new members to "replace" those members who leave for whatever reasons: death, moving, losing interest, and so forth.

But that isn't necessarily true, I have discovered. Reality has taught me that congregations can be very good at sabotaging what you would think were their best interests. Why? Here again, the answer is complex, but one big reason is that congregations may fear losing their identity, an understandable concern. Growth doesn't have to mean that, though.

Unfortunately, I have learned that congregations -- like individuals -- sometimes say one thing, but do another. How we appear to those who wander into our buildings is so important, but we too often fail to think about how we appear to outsiders. Visitors pick up on tensions and ill will in a congregation. I am not talking only about how warm and welcoming you are to new people

on any given Sunday morning. Equally important is how kind and caring we are to each other during the sharing parts of the service and during the social time after a service.

I once remarked to a long-time Prairie member that I "preach to the visitor". That member looked at me incredulously and asked me what I meant. What I mean is that if you are a regular attendee on Sunday mornings, then I assume that you already know how special Unitarian Universalism is. I want to get that first time visitor and/or uncertain newcomer excited about this faith tradition of ours -- I want them eager to learn more. Of course, I can't "hook" new people on my own. All of you are necessary as well.

So, yes, I suppose I *do* want to change Prairie; I do want you to change parts of your culture to make it more alluring to newcomers -- but not because I don't approve of Prairie the way it is. I want to change Prairie in some fundamental ways, yes, but I am not interested in destroying its identity. I don't think of Prairie's current situation as an either/or dilemma. I think of it as a both/and challenge.

What happens next? I hope that there will be many open-ended, open-minded, open-hearted conversations occurring at Prairie over the next few months in which we talk about Prairie's goals, its future, its mission. To that end, I am starting to schedule meetings with various individuals and thinking about dates for congregation-wide listening and discussion sessions.

What do you really want Prairie to be? What do you think it is right now, at this moment in time? What is Prairie's culture? Let's talk!

Enjoy the beautiful spring/summer weather! Rev. Sandy

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:

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