



PRAIRIE CIRCLE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION
UPDATED Annual Reports Packet
June 9, 2024

Members of PCUUC:

The 5th Principle of our Covenant promotes “the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.” This is affirmed through your participation in our Congregation’s Annual Meeting. To be best informed of the topics, please review this **Annual Reports Packet** and read through the **Annual Meeting Voting Materials Packet**.

Our Annual Meeting is scheduled to take place on June 9, 2024 via Zoom following an abbreviated Worship Service. You will use the same Zoom link for the Sunday Worship Service and for the Annual Meeting that follows. We invite all involved at PCUUC to attend; however, we ask that non-Members refrain from voting. All votes will be checked against the official list of eligible Members.

We ask that questions regarding the Reports or Voting topics be made via this form prior to 5 p.m. on June 3, 2024: <https://pcuuc.breezechms.com/form/f930ed4412>

Next, the forum of Zoom allows for features that aid in the running of the Annual Meeting.

- The meeting may be recorded.
- The “raise your hand” feature will be available to motion or present questions/ideas.
- Voting will be done through the Zoom Polling feature. Two-member households may use the same device to submit their votes.

BYLAWS SECTION 5.09 QUORUM AND VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Except as specifically provided in other sections of these bylaws, a quorum for all meetings of the membership shall be twenty percent (20%) of the membership determined by a review of the official membership list. A vote of two-thirds of those members present and voting shall determine each question. Proxies will not be honored at meetings of the membership.

Sincerely,

Karen Schachtschneider
PCUUC Church Administrator

Report from the Minister for PCUUC

Reflections on the first 5 months: January-May, 2024

It truly is a joy to be serving as minister, pastor, and chaplain with all of you at Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation and with our neighboring sibling congregation of Tree of Life. I feel like we are off to a strong start in our shared ministry together, and I hope that you feel the same.

Although this is annual report, based on the church calendar, it is perhaps more accurately a first quarter report, representing approximately 2.5 months time with Prairie Circle and 2.5 months time with TOL.

In my reports to the Board, I organize my reports around the seven areas of ministry competencies identified by the UUA for UU ministers that will be part of my fellowship renewal process. I also submitted a first year plan to both the PCUUC and TOLUUC Boards in January. For those who like and appreciate details, I have included the board reports and first year ministry plan here: [Minister Board Reports](#).

Some specific highlights over the past few months, include but is not limited to:

- Providing caring support through hospital and rehabilitation center visits.
- Engaging in shared/joint worship services that include both PCUUC and TOLUUC.
- Working with the Welcoming Congregation Teams to recognize Days of Observance and supporting the work of Welcoming renewal.
- Offering and facilitating the 3 groups of the 6-session Transgender Inclusion in Congregations course
- Beginning to develop internal and external community connections
- Working collaboratively with Jennifer Weigand, the RE team, and the worship arts team in offering intergenerational worship services on Jennifer's Sundays off.
- Working collaboratively with Scott Helmke, Trisha Steele, Geoff Diegan of Prairie Circle Charter School, the PCUUC Board, and PCUUC congregation in developing an MOU/renewed relationship with PCCS for continued use of the Barn and involvement in shared goals/community programs.

During this first quarter, my primary focus has been getting to know all of you as individual people, learn the congregational history, culture, and processes, and begin to get acquainted with the surrounding community and context. In order to do this, I have been attending as many of the various committee meetings as I can as well as meeting with individual congregational lay leaders and members. The ministerial start-up that took place in March with both congregations and Rev. Phil Lund, Congregational Life Consultant from our UUA MidAmerica Region office, was an important part of this introduction and I thank you for your participation in this process.

I have also sought to make meaningful contributions over the past few months to the worship life and pastoral care needs of each congregation. My approach is one of shared and collaborative ministry seeking to work closely with our lay leadership in these areas. I appreciate the gifts of creativity, compassion, and commitment that you bring to our worship and our care for one another. I look forward to the year ahead in which we continue to grow together in these areas.

In the upcoming year ahead, some ministerial priorities have emerged through our shared ministerial start-up process and through conversations with our Board and Program Council. In each of these efforts, I will continue to honor your input and gifts, as well as engage external UUA and community resources.

Some ministerial priorities in the year ahead include:

- increasing external community involvement and engagement.
- supporting lay leadership and shared ministry growth and development (including, but not limited to, worship and pastoral care).
- Continuing to reinvigorate the work of the Committee Council.
- engaging in and supporting long-term planning toward financial health and stability.
- Continuing to strengthen the relationship between PCUUC and PCCS.
- Collaborate with the Committee on Ministry that includes representatives between PCUUC and TOLUUC.
- Continue to support, encourage, and help develop the relationship between PCUUC and TOLUUC.

Thanks to each of you for your warm welcome and ongoing support to my ministry and our shared ministry.

Respectfully submitted in faith and hope, in service and community,

Chaplain Dave Becker

2023-2024 PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Scott Helmke



I'd like to say from the outset there are a *lot* of people to thank, and I don't think I'll be able to do justice to everybody who contributes in one way or another... so I will regretfully only explicitly thank just a few people by name. Right up front though I would definitely like to thank my fellow Board members, who have stepped up and helped out rather more than expected during this eventful church year. I would also like to thank our administrator Karen Schachtschneider, who provides a wealth of continuity to a board that is changing completely every couple of years.

The highlight of this church year was that we were able to hire a minister, Chaplain David Becker. We would not have been able to do this without our partnership with Tree of Life UU Congregation, who made up the other half of Chaplain Dave's full time job of being part time pastor to our two congregations. We were able to work with Tree of Life in both the minister search and the hiring process, and also to enjoy being able to collaborate with them for shared services. Even so, it will be a challenge to continue with Chaplain Dave beyond this coming year as we are drawing on our reserves to make this happen. My great hope is that we can find the means to continue this wonderful partnership.

Another significant thing for this year was and still is the changing of the Byron Colby Barn ownership and management from the Liberty Prairie Foundation to the Prairie Crossing Charter School. As you may have seen and/or heard in our discussions about this, the school is not interested in renting out the Barn and has already ceased renting it out for weddings and other events. Instead, they have invited us to partner with them to produce a small number of educational community events and presentations, on topics such as sustainability, equity, and other shared concerns. We have already reached a mostly complete (as of this writing) memorandum of understanding with the school, and we will vote on approving this new relationship during the annual meeting on June 9. We have already hosted a question and answer session with members of the congregation and received some very useful questions and also a general consensus on moving forward with this arrangement. If for some reason this arrangement does not work out, we can revisit the work the board did to identify and tour possible alternatives to the barn as a meeting space.

On the organizational side, we were able to finally implement Google Workspace for email, virtual meetings, drive space, and other resources. This is a free nonprofit version of Workspace, which gives us many very useful tools that will allow much better continuity across different board and committee members. I'd like to thank Jason Grover for working to make this happen, including the educational sessions he did with the Board and other committees to make sure we could take advantage of this new platform.

Sincerely,
Scott

2023-2024 TREASURER'S REPORT: PENNYSUE MCKENZIE

Finishing my second year as Treasurer I'd like to again start with many thanks to those whose knowledge, help and patience is well deserved. Of course you, the congregation, Joyce DeWitt, Karen Schachtschneider and all the PCUUC Board members. Thank you all.

Looking at our income you'll see that our pledges are down. We've gone from fiscal year 2022-2023 at a pledge total of \$76,130 to our pledge total of \$68,840 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Since our annual meeting is prior to the end of our fiscal year any pledges or funds that are received past the date this was all prepared and before July 1, 2024 are not reflected in our budget.



Our fundraiser was a huge success again this year with an income of \$4592.00 which gave us a much needed boost financially. Many thanks to Jason Grover, Sarah Grover and all those who participated by volunteering, donating and purchasing.

Included in the Annual Meeting Packet this year is a breakdown of the minister's compensation to address questions last year regarding this issue. I hope we all realize that costs of insurance will rise and we have an obligation to meet our contract in providing these to our minister.

Donations to our Religious Education program continue to help keep their budget in check and donations to our coffee and treats help with those expenses as well. Monetary donations to the coffee fund are no longer necessary as this expense has been absorbed into office expenses.

I'm suggesting a 3.2% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for our current employees based on the government recommendation of 3.2%. This, of course, slightly raises our tax payments for those employees. There is also a new law in Illinois, the Paid Leave for All Workers Act (PLAWA) which allows all workers to earn up to 40 hours of paid leave from work each year. Workers can use paid leave for any reason and employers may not require workers to provide a basis for their time off request. This adds a minimum amount to our budget for employees that were not previously earning any paid time off. There is no requirement for workers to work a certain amount of hours per week to earn this time.

I'd like to take a little time to explain the use of the term "reserves" in our budget. We use the term "reserves" when discussing the equity on our Balance Sheet. Part of our equity are the earmarked reserve accounts whose value is retained from year to year. The other portion is Accumulated Surplus which consists of the total of past years' budgets that were unused. Any operating budget money not used at the end of the fiscal year, our net income, is automatically rolled into an accumulated surplus "reserve" account. As of the writing of this document our underspending, or net income for 2023 - 2024, is \$56,100.00 partially because we budgeted for a 12 month minister rather than for six months. We are therefore asking for a transfer from the accumulated surplus "reserve" account of close to the same amount to help balance the new year's budget, basically carrying over the net income from one year to the next.

Thank you for everything you have done this past year to help Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation continue to progress.

PennySue McKenzie
PCUUC Treasurer

2023-2024 MUSIC TEAM REPORT

The Music Team continues to coordinate music for all services, with both Christine Tyll and Bill Chapin playing piano on various Sundays.

2023-2024 WELCOMING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Welcoming Committee is making great strides towards renewing our welcoming commitment. So far we have talked about 3 significant dates for the LGBTQ+ Community and are planning on presenting 3 more. Several of the congregation are taking the "Transforming Hearts" Curriculum and there are plans to have a session that is a one day affair to teach about LGBTQ+ issues.

We purchased a new more all encompassing flag to display at our services. We have had one sermon on LGBTQ+ themes and are planning at least one more if not two. We are excited because we will meet all the requirements for renewal by the end of this calendar year. The plan is to then renew bi-annually. Our committee could not put through the renewal without the congregation's commitment - Thank you to all who have helped and will help on this journey.

2023-2024 CARING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Caring Committee has ten active members including the two co-chairs, Leticia Swift and Norine Fendrych. Members of the Caring Committee record the Joys and Sorrows each week and reach out to congregants in need by providing meals, sending cards of concern, sympathy, and congratulation, making phone calls and home visits, and providing transportation to medical appointments.

Religious Education 2024 Annual Report

Staff										
Jennifer Weigand - Director of Religious Education Primary Teachers- Sam Smith Nursery Caregiver- Linda Bowser										
The Numbers										
Registered Families - 8	Regular RE Children - 8 Regular Nursery Children - 1	Visitors-0 Curricula Volunteers - 1								
Highlights:										
<p>Sent Valentine cards to Hillcrest Nursing Home 2 curricula taught Hosted Activities/Games for Annual Picnic Family Outing- Feed My Starving Children Delivered monthly RE supply bags to families</p>	<p>Annual Easter Egg Hunt- 15 Children participated Made & Sold Soup in Jar- Proceeds went to PADS Once a month Virtual Curriculum (Sundays @11am) Volunteer/teacher background checks</p>									
<p>Summer Session: Using the premise of popular superheroes like Black Panther and Teen Titans, this curriculum builds the foundation for anti-oppression, personal responsibilities, and love. Our Welcome Circle begins with lighting the Chalice and sharing Joys and Concerns. Group reflection includes exploring questions like "what can help us work through our fears?" and "how can we help our community?" The students will continue to explore these questions throughout the morning with group activities or games, like making an obstacle course or trying out improv games. In Superhero Academy, the students develop a sense of creativity and agency, knowing they have the strength and resources to work for justice in our world. <i>These lessons will take place on Sunday Mornings at the barn after the story for all ages and the 2nd Sunday of the month via Zoom at 11am.</i></p>										
<p>Fall Programming: RE is planning to purchase Soul Matters Curricula again for the 2024-2025 church year. This curriculum focuses on figuring out our values, dealing with our needs, being part of a spiritual community, and doing the right thing—key steps toward spiritual maturity. Our monthly themes will coincide with the Worship themes.</p>										
Thank You PCUUC RE Volunteers!!										
<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <td>Linda Bowser</td> <td>Sarah Grover</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lynn Hepler</td> <td>Jan Kirch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lucinda Smetana</td> <td>Sam Smith</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tamara Wanshek</td> <td>Judi Young</td> </tr> </table>			Linda Bowser	Sarah Grover	Lynn Hepler	Jan Kirch	Lucinda Smetana	Sam Smith	Tamara Wanshek	Judi Young
Linda Bowser	Sarah Grover									
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RE Budget/Expenses										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase Soul Matters • Craft supplies • DRE Office supplies • Teacher supplies • Special Sunday Crafts (Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Easter, Etc.) • DRE Conferences and training 										



2023-2024 SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE REPORT

SJC Mission Statement: In harmony with our PCUUC Principles, the Social Justice Committee is committed to social environmental and economic justice at church, in the community and for all Earth's inhabitants. The SJC is chaired by Jan Kirch assisted by Tamara Wanshek, Trisha Steele, John Young and Jim Whitton.

The Social Justice Committee attempts to meet monthly on the first Sunday of each month. Unfortunately, this schedule is interrupted due to various reasons.

Financial Support: Shared Plate

2023

- **September/October – Avon Cares Food Pantry**
- **November/December – PADS Lake County**

2024

- **January/February – UU Prison Ministry/Northern IL Food Bank**
- **March/April – Green Town**
- **Vets Closet**
- **July/August - PRIDE -LGBTQ+**

Financial Support of RE:

Teaching RE, October and April; supporting Nature Walk and Soup in a Jar effort

Action Items:

Styrofoam Collection, PADS food, batteries, Midwest Veterans, clothing collections in November 2023 and May 2024

- **Green Living Fair in Spring held at CLC**
 - **Nearly 50 Exhibitors from clubs, congregations, youth groups**
 - **Shoes, batteries, eye glasses were collected and SWALCO distributed the NEW Recycling Guidelines**
 - **A great way to promote PCUUC**

Community Outreach Projects:

- **Fran & Dave Bates – volunteer at HACES to train immigrants for Citizenship testing**
- **Jim Whitton – coordinates with Veterans and Vets Closet**
- **Dave Bates, Dave Bozek, Peggy Heeter work on 'getting out the VOTE' (registering students, writing post cards, etc.)**

2023-2024 WORSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

The Worship Committee appreciates all who contribute to our worship services- thank you to our volunteer service leaders, readers, zoom hosts and set-up and tear down crews. Thank you to our musicians, congregants who share personal homilies, speakers both from our community and those across the country who join us online. Kudos to our excellent new Worship Coordinator, Vicki Golz, who started with us in February. Thank you to Prairie Circle members and friends who contribute to our operating costs.

And big thanks to Chaplain Dave who adds so much to what we as a committee, and we as a congregation can be. It has been exciting to brainstorm and think “out of the box” with Dave, compare notes and share services with Tree of Life UU Congregation, and to see creativity bloom in our multigenerational services.

Our committee is thankful for the vibrancy of our congregation and what we can contribute to it. Our outside speaker budget 'ask' has been reduced for next year with Dave covering around 18 services. We will continue bringing in monthly virtual speakers, planning outdoor services and we always welcome other congregants to join our committee. We meet online on the 4th Monday of the month.

2023-2024 MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

To the Board of Trustees and the members of PCUUC:

This is a listing of Membership Committee activities for the Church Year ending June 30, 2024, and reported to the Annual Meeting of the PCUUC congregation on Sunday, June 9, 2024.

1. Mailing of postcards to church members to stay in touch with church members.
2. Staffing and supply of pamphlets and other church literature at the Welcome Table.
3. Coordination of Greeters.
4. Efforts to organize the Introduction to PCUUC session for newcomers who are considering membership in our congregation.
5. Coordination of Membership efforts with the Tree of Life congregation.
6. Coordination of activities with other PCUUC communities.

By working with the Tree of Life Congregation, we on the committee are hopeful of greater effectiveness in attracting people to both of our congregations.

Respectfully submitted,
Leo M. Wazlo
Chair,
Membership Committee
Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Grays Lake, Illinois 60630