



Prairie Lakes Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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Find us on Facebook!

JULY 2026 NEWSLETTER

As we embrace the summer season, we're taking a pause from our regular on-site programming to reflect, recharge, and thoughtfully prepare for an exciting new fellowship year beginning in September. While our on-site activities are on break, we invite you to stay connected through several wonderful off-site summer events that offer opportunities for fellowship, fun, and spiritual growth. We look forward to gathering with you this summer and welcoming everyone back this fall!

Summer Off-Site Programming



Walk the Spaulding Hill Wetlands Conservancy

When: Sunday, July 19, 9:00AM

Where: 5751 Spaulding hill Road, Ripon

Pat Dobrinska will lead this leisurely walk along the trail loop.

This hike offers peaceful, open views of the Sunnyside wetland shoreline and surrounding woodland. We welcome children and adults to join us to explore the 1.5 miles of hiking trails that serve as a scenic low-impact recreational habitat.



Walk the Tichora Conservancy Property

When: Sunday, August 9, 9:00AM

Where: 2599 Oakwood Beach Road | Parking Lot at trail head off Oakwood Beach Rd

Join Pat Dobrinska for a spectacular hike through towering forest and vibrant restored prairie, and with breathtaking panoramic views of Big Green Lake. Explore this remarkable property featuring 800 feet of pristine Big Green Lake frontage and 1,200 feet of Spring Lake shoreline, where diverse landscapes, abundant wildlife, and stunning scenery create an unforgettable outdoor experience. Whether you're a seasoned

hiker, a nature enthusiast, or simply looking for a peaceful escape, this hike offers a rare opportunity to experience stunning vistas, diverse habitats, and tranquility. Bring your camera, your curiosity, and your sense of adventure, you won't want to miss this outdoor experience!

Reminder: Friday, July 3, 10AM: Coffee, Cookies & Conversation in downtown Ripon

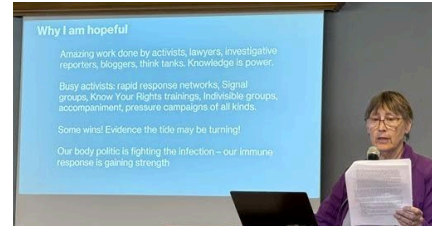
Members can gather at Ripon **Dough Company** to connect with fellow PLUUFers at the Ripon Dough Company 223 Watson Street, Ripon No program- just coffee, cookies, and friendly conversation.

Fellowship Notes

A Recap of Kat Griffith's Immigration Presentation

While Kat Griffith's ENGAGE presentation on immigration is briefly summarized on page 6, that recap only scratches the surface of the eye-opening information she shared.

Kat guided attendees through more than four decades of U.S. immigration enforcement policy, examining how approaches have evolved from 1980 through 2024 and what those changes have meant in practice. Among the striking facts she presented was the dramatic increase in border enforcement spending: the cost per apprehension rose from approximately \$656 in 2000 to nearly \$11,000 by 2018. She also explored the factors behind the 250,000 apprehensions recorded at the southern border in 2023, the policy responses implemented by the Biden administration, and the ongoing debates surrounding immigration enforcement strategies under both Biden and Trump.



Beyond government policy, Kat highlighted the often-overlooked influence of grassroots activists and advocacy campaigns in shaping immigration enforcement practices and ICE policies. Throughout the presentation, she combined data, historical context, and thoughtful analysis to provide a deeper understanding of one of the most complex issues facing our nation today.

This brief overview cannot capture the depth, nuance, and insight of Kat's presentation. **If you know of other congregations, community groups, civic organizations, or other audiences would be interested in hosting a timely and informative discussion on immigration, Kat would love to connect. If you know of a group that may be interested, please share the details with us: pluufripon@gmail.com and we'll pass it on to Kat.**

With Gratitude for Barbara Lukas's Years of Vision, Service, and Friendship



In last month's newsletter, we shared that Barbara would be leaving Wisconsin and moving to Virginia to be closer to her son, daughter-in-law, and two grandsons. She is pictured here with her son and grandson in Fond du Lac as they helped her pack for this new chapter.

While preparing for the move and downsizing, Barbara generously donated several beautiful vases, her Harvest Fest Hat, and other treasured items to PLUUF. Thank you to everyone who shared words of appreciation and well wishes. Your messages were compiled into a booklet that was presented to Barbara, who said, "I'll treasure it always."



Warm Wishes for Dave & Judy Harris

Though Judy and Dave moved to Appleton years ago, they remain cherished members of our PLUUF family, and we are grateful to stay connected with them.

Many of you will remember that Dave faced some significant health challenges in the past and is now doing better. More recently, Judy has been recovering from a fall, and we continue to hold her in our thoughts as she heals. Please join us in sending warm wishes, healing energy, light, and love to this beautiful couple. We miss their presence at PLUUF and are thankful that the bonds of friendship and community continue to keep us connected across the miles.

ANNUAL MEETING RECAP by Tanya Schwartz-Roeper



Annual Congregational Meeting Highlights

PLUUF Moderator Connie Ghinazzi opened the meeting with a chalice lighting and reflected on her two years of service as Board Moderator. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve and shared how the role has contributed to her personal growth.

2025/26 Fiscal year membership total: 30 | Members present: 16 | Members voting by Proxy: 3

Minutes and Budget Review

Members approved the minutes from last year's annual meeting before turning their attention to PLUUF's financial outlook.

The finance team consisting of PLUUF's Treasurer Beth Howman-Combs and Financial Consultant Tanya Schwartz-Roeper reported that the current budget is expected to end the fiscal year in balance. Although income has fallen below projections, careful management of expenses has helped offset the shortfall.



As they developed the budget for the coming fiscal year, the finance team adjusted projected member contributions to a more realistic level and placed greater emphasis on fundraising as an important source of revenue. The proposed budget is balanced and reflects a sustainable financial plan for the year ahead, but PLUUF will incur an additional one time capital expense this year with the necessary replacement of the entryway steps, landing and ramp. (see next paragraph)

Building Improvement Project



Longtime PLUUF member Laird DeCramer will lead the project to remove and replace the building's ramp, steps, and landing. The total cost of this project is estimated at \$14,000. To fund the project, \$2,000 will be allocated from PLUUF's operating account, with up to \$12,000 withdrawn from the Golden Rule Savings account if needed. Connie suggested organizing a fundraising campaign this fall to help reduce the amount that must be taken from savings.

TOTAL PROJECTED INCOME & EXPENSES FOR 2026/27 FISCAL YEAR: \$30,910 plus an additional one time expense of up to \$12,000 for the Ramp/Landing/Stairs renovation.

VOTING RESULTS: 16 approved the budget 3 Abstained

This is the current income/expense report that was presented at the annual meeting as of May 31: *As of 5/31 income & expenses are very close: Income: 28,547 Expenses: 26,045 with 1 month of the fiscal year to go. (The UUA CEF long term vision account is up \$4,202.83 as of April and is counted as income)*

Detailed Treasurer Reports past and present are always available for member review by contacting tanyapapermaker@gmail.com or pluufripon@gmail.com

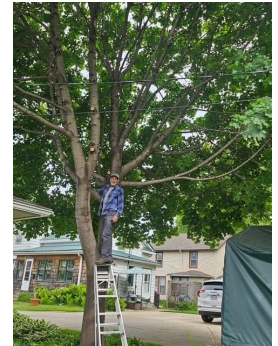
Summer Off-Site Event ideas:

For the second summer in a row, PLUUF will take the summer off from on-site programming. Off-site events were discussed:

1. Potluck & kayak event at Connie Ghinazzi's home on Little Green
2. 2 Green Lake Conservancy property hikes led by Pat Dobrinska
3. Proposed boating activity for the kids

Details regarding these events and more will be provided in the week(s) leading up to the event.

PLUUF Grounds & Garden Care: Beth Howman-Combs thanked Brody Roost for rototilling and for removing the two layers of landscape fabric from the west garden bed. Beth and Becky have discussed planting an evergreen, hydrangea and some flowers in that garden bed in the fall. Plants near the ramp may need to be relocated with the projected renovation project in the fall. The raised planter beds have been seeded with flowers. The 7 principle sign bed has been replanted and Beth thanked Spud for donating the groundcover. Kip Klawitter was also mentioned at the meeting for the amazing work he did trimming the branches from the maple tree on the east side of the building. (see photo)



Welcoming Congregation Renewal Update



PLUUF became a UU Welcoming Congregation in 2007, affirming its commitment to the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in all aspects of congregational life.

In recent years, PLUUF has completed annual renewals, including each of the past five years.

The Board recommended moving from annual renewal to a three-year cycle. The Board noted that renewal helps keep PLUUF's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion visible through education, outreach, and community engagement. However, the annual process requires significant volunteer time, and many members feel inclusion is already well established in the congregation's ongoing practice. Moving to a three-year renewal schedule would reduce administrative burden and help ensure the process remains engaging, meaningful, and mission-driven rather than routine.

Welcoming Congregation

By renewing every three years instead of annually, we can devote more time to meaningful action and approach each renewal with fresh enthusiasm rather than simply going through the motions.

A congregational opinion poll at the Annual Meeting showed strong support for this change:

- 17 votes — every 3 years
- 1 vote — every 2 years
- 1 vote — continue annually

Recognition of New Members this year: 0 Discussion took place on how we should take a little more initiative on inviting friends, family, and like-minded people to our Sunday services.

Community Outreach

Ideas included continuing the Santa Club, having a booth at the next Pride event, continuing with coffee and conversation 1st Friday of the month gatherings. Brainstorming included having a sign near the road with upcoming events, announcements in the local newspapers, WhatsApp Ripon, community calendar through the chamber and WRPN, flyers on bulletin boards

Per the Board's request, Tanya prepared a statement explaining her community outreach proposal to partner with Open Circle UU Fellowship in Fond du Lac for the Festivals of Light 10th anniversary celebration. The idea was proposed because Open Circle is a larger congregation bringing a larger audience, is a neighboring UU congregation, plus longtime PLUUF member Jill Stiemsma has networked with them in the past. The Open Circle's program coordinator welcomed the proposal, and December 20 was identified as the date.

Tanya explained that the proposal was intended as a one-time collaboration for the 10th anniversary celebration of the Festivals of Light event. However, feedback from the Board of Directors earlier in the year, plus feedback from the congregation at the Town Hall meeting showed a preference to keep the event at Prairie Lakes. As a result, the Festivals of Light event will remain at Prairie Lakes. Jill and Tanya will keep their commitment to Open Circle and assist them in creating their own version of this holiday event.

Article VIII Bylaw change + Board Member Election Ballot Results

1. Bylaw change: 19 members voted in favor and 1 abstained
 - The congregation voted overwhelmingly to change Article VIII of the bylaws to allow one Board member to serve on the Nominating Committee

Board Member Elections: All 3 candidates received 18 "yes" votes each

1. Moderator – Connie Ghinazzi will enter the 1st year of a 2nd 2-yr term
2. Secretary – Cheri Salzberg will enter the 1st year of a 1st 2-yr term
3. At-Large Representative #2 Nicole Roost will enter the 1st year of a 2nd 2-yr term

Balance Sheet & Treasurer Report As of May 30, 2026, as presented at the Annual Meeting

BALANCE SHEET:

BMO Checking (Operating Budget)	\$5,872.84
Golden Rule Savings (Short-term Vision Savings)	\$29,022.26
(See proposed capital expense withdrawal from this account on bottom of next page)	
Golden Rule Checking for Debit Card use	\$925.35
UUA Common Endowment Fund (Long-term Vision Savings)	<u>\$54,796.15</u> (increase \$4,202.83 '25-'26)
Total Assets	\$90,616.60

*Meeting Minutes and detailed Treasurer Reports are
always available on file at PLUUF or by request.*

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT IN June



Saturday, June 6, PRIDE '26 Took place at the Village Green in downtown Ripon from 1-4PM. Attendees enjoyed Food, Music, Games and much More! Brad Roost and the Social Justice Alliance group from Ripon High School played a big role in the event.

Worship Service Sunday, June 7: Kicking off Pride month with Travis Nygard: Exploring LGBTQ Science: Surprising Studies and Fun Facts.

Travis Nygard is an Associate Professor at Ripon College, where he teaches art history and museum studies. Travis shared some of the ways that scientists have explored the topic of LGBTQ people in recent decades and led a discussion. Participants shared their thoughts on the topic, including facts that they may have heard, as well as opinions about how well the objective scientific world captures the subjective experience of gender and sexuality.



Annual Meeting Sunday, June 14:

It was a big, important day. The annual meeting served multiple purposes, including the board of director elections, evaluating and assessing progress towards achieving our mission, reviewing financials, setting the budget, and setting goals for the upcoming year.

Please see pages 3-5 for a recap.



ENGAGE Sunday, June 21: "Immigration Today: A Conversation with Kat Griffith"

Kat led a timely and insightful presentation on the current state of immigration. A member of the Fond du Lac County Board, representing District 1, Kat is a respected community leader based in Ripon. She is widely recognized for her dedicated advocacy on behalf of immigrants and asylum seekers. Kat brings both professional insight and firsthand community experience to the conversation. Her extensive work in immigration policy and local community development offers a thoughtful, informed perspective on one of today's most important issues. It was a very informative morning. Kat wants to bring this message to other audiences. If anyone knows of a group that would like Kat to share this information, she is looking for wider audiences. Contact pluufripon@gmail.com.



A BIG thank you to Connie Ghinazzi for hosting PLUUF's kick-off to off-site summer programming. This potluck event took place at Connie's lake house on Little Green in Markesan on June 27.