



Prairie Lakes Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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Find us on Facebook!

OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

*Annual group photo taken after the
Water Sharing Ceremony Worship Service on 9/6*



ENGAGE Sunday, October 4, 10:00: “Gather, Share, & Listen - A Fireside Chat” with the Committee for ENGAGED Sundays

The Committee for ENGAGE Sundays wants to hear from you! Join us for an informal time of sharing and conversation. Bring a thought, story, poem, news item, question, or idea you'd like to share or discuss. The possibilities are endless! If all goes well, we hope to make Fireside Chats a regular event, perhaps twice a year. We look forward to hearing from you!



Worship Service Sunday, October 11, 10:00 AM Plus Potluck.

“People We Should Emulate” with Jill Stiemsma Can we save our democracy and keep moving toward social justice and equality? Look around PLUUF and across our community, state, and country, and you'll find people working every day to do just that. The October 11 service will recognize these activists, famous and not-so-famous, including ourselves who are standing up, speaking out, and working for a better future. **Come be inspired, recognize the work already underway, and consider what we can do together.**



ENGAGE Sunday, October 18, 10:00 AM “Beyond the Single Story” with Kathryn Severson

Join Kathryn for a thought-provoking session on how our own biases and assumptions shape the way we see people from different cultures and with different beliefs. We'll watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's powerful TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, followed by guided reflection and discussion about stereotypes, open-mindedness, and recognizing our own blind spots. With a polarized political climate leading up to the election, this is an opportunity to pause, center ourselves, and consider how we can approach one another with greater curiosity, empathy, and intention.



Worship Service Sunday, October 25, 10:00 AM with Robyn Davis-Bartow: **Meditation Part 1 Why Bother?**

By now we all know that meditation is good for us. But so is eating raw kale and taking cold showers. Discover what meditating means, different approaches and techniques, and about the myriad real life benefits that meditation brings to a flourishing spiritual life. Cold showers are up to you.

“Meditation Part 2 Experience” will take place on November 8th.

Annual Report 2025-26

The Prairie Lakes annual report offers comprehensive transparency and includes detailing PLUUF's fiscal year financial performance and non-financial achievements, like an overview of both our Worship Service and ENGAGE programming schedule, membership and attendance statistics, and more. It serves as a vital communication tool for our congregation when it comes to a comprehensive summary of our previous fiscal year. **We hope you will read it.** It was sent via email to all members but **can be sent by request by emailing: tanyapapermaker@gmail.com**

Prairie Lakes Annual Report 2025-26 *This is page 1 of a 12 page document*



Connie Ghinazzi
Moderator



Michaela Myers|Cheri Salzberg
Secretary 1st ½| Interim Secretary



Beth Howman-Combs
Treasurer



Nicole Roost
At-Large Rep



Jim Goyette
At-Large Rep



Tanya Schwartz-Roeper
Administrative/financial Consultant
2018-present

The Annual Report Message from the Moderator by Connie Ghinazzi

As I begin my second term as moderator, I want to reflect on our strong 2025–26 year. Tanya has done a terrific job preparing our annual report, which highlights all that we accomplished together. Please take some time to read it.

We continued several practices begun in 2024–25, including our town hall gathering, summer sabbatical break, and alternating ENGAGE and Worship Sundays. We began our new year with our Water Sharing service on September 13.

Our Board will continue with the same members, with a few changes in roles. I will continue as Moderator, Beth begins her second year as Treasurer, Cheri Salzberg begins her two-year term as Secretary, and Jim and Nicole will serve as At-large members.

Please share your ideas, interests, and concerns with us. If you have not already done so, please complete the revised Skills & Interests document. We want to know how you would like to be more involved at PLUUF. It takes all of us to make our Fellowship flourish.

One of our ongoing challenges is attracting more people to our community. Judy Morgan and Linda Powell are developing new outreach ideas, including posting information about our services and speakers on public bulletin boards this fall.

We are also replacing the ramp and steps at our entrance. One-time donations toward this project would be greatly appreciated and will help reduce the amount we need to take from savings. Please designate your contribution for the ramp project.

We also need volunteers to help with Sunday services by opening, making coffee, cleaning up, and closing. Our Fellowship thrives when we all share in the work.

I am excited to serve again as your moderator and to work with this wonderful Board, Tanya, and all of you. 2025–26 was a wonderful year, and I look forward to making the coming year even better.

As Becky said in her 2024 moderator comments: “Together we will continue to grow in faith, deepen our connections and strengthen our fellowship.” That is my hope and goal for all of us this year.

Prairie Lakes Joined the Green Lake Area Animal Shelter in Celebrating 33 Years of Compassion and Community

Thank you to Prairie Lakes for supporting the Green Lake Area Animal Shelter's (GLAAS) Legacy Event that took place in the Town Square Community Ballroom on September 18 celebrating 33 years of compassion, community, and commitment to animals in need.

PLUUF's involvement began with a spring Art & Service Auction fundraising event that invited PLUUFers to raise their paddles and make a \$25 contribution toward the Legacy Event. Together, those individual gifts raised \$350, the exact amount needed for PLUUF to become an official sponsor. It was a wonderful reminder of what can happen when many people contribute a little to make something meaningful possible.

More than 100 people were in attendance. The Legacy Event also brought together several PLUUFers who contributed their time, talents, and presence to the celebration. Becky Feyen offered a heartfelt tribute honoring the late Janine Rubeck who served as shelter manager for 20 years and who led many Animal Blessing services at PLUUF. Jim Goyette provided technical support and Pat Dobrinska participated in the pet-inspired art show and is also featured in the GLAAS documentary film. PLUUF friend and popular guest speaker Travis Nygard co-curated the pet-inspired art exhibit and introduced the participating artists at the Legacy Event.

Several other PLUUFers showed up to celebrate and lend their support, making the evening a wonderful opportunity to connect with others in the community and celebrate the shelter's 33-year legacy.



Becky Feyen giving a tribute to the late Janine Rubeck whose image appears on the screen behind her.



Videographer Skip Walker and PLUUF member Jim Goyette testing out the tech equipment before the event.



Tanya Schwartz-Roeper coordinated the event and served as MC.

The event was organized for the Green Lake Area Animal Shelter and coordinated by Tanya Schwartz-Roeper, whose efforts brought together an evening honoring the shelter's history, its impact, and the many people who have helped make its work possible.

It was a great example of PLUUFers coming together to contribute their time, talents, generosity, and enthusiasm to a meaningful community event. We're grateful to everyone who helped make this special celebration possible, and especially proud that our small spring fundraiser became part of a much larger celebration of 33 years of compassion and community.



PLUUF friend and guest speaker, Travis Nygard, not only co-curated the pet-inspired art show but also had 3 works of art included in the Town Square Lobby exhibit.



PLUUF member Pat Dobrinska not only co-curated the pet-inspired art exhibit, but six of her paintings were featured, too!



Shelter alum Hank the pig made a special guest appearance at this event! PLUUF member Randy Roeper along with many others had an opportunity to meet Hank and give him cookie treats.



A BIG thank you to **Elizabeth Olson** who donated items off the September Wish List and more! In October we are seeking the following items:

1. Plastic or metal garden rakes (used or new)
2. Copy Paper
3. Granola bars



Are You Interested in Getting Involved With the Ripon Area Food Pantry?

Gary Berger, the Treasurer of The Ripon Area Food Pantry, will lead the semi-annual meeting on Monday, **October 12, at 6:00 PM.** The meeting will be held in Room #8 near the main office at St. Catherine of Siena Church at 228 E. Blossom St., Ripon. **If you are interested in learning more about the food pantry and possibly getting involved, you are invited to attend.**

Democracy is more than a political system. It is a sacred practice of how we live together, rooted in covenant, collective accountability, and the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

While the promise of democracy has never fully included all of us, we believe a more just and inclusive democracy is possible. Not a return to some idealized past, but a liberatory future, one shaped by shared power, collective responsibility, and the belonging of everyone.



Through UU the Vote, Side With Love's flagship democracy campaign, Unitarian Universalists across the country are organizing to build a genuine multiracial democracy. What began as an election-year initiative has grown into a year-round movement, mobilizing people of faith to defend voting rights, strengthen democratic participation, and cultivate communities committed to justice.

UU the Vote equips congregations and community members to participate meaningfully through voter registration, issue education, get-out-the-vote efforts, voter protection, leadership development, and sustained organizing in partnership with frontline movements.

But democracy cannot live only in election cycles. It must be practiced every day, in our relationships, our congregations, and our collective decisions. Efforts to undermine elections, ban books, and criminalize protest are part of a broader agenda to consolidate power for the few. True democracy lives in our relationships and our organizing, not just in the ballot box.

Side With Love organizes to nurture that practice, helping communities move from values to action and from individual participation to collective power.

Together, we are building a democracy where everyone belongs, everyone has a voice, and everyone has the opportunity to help shape our shared future. - *From the UUA Website*

What's Happening on Worship & ENGAGE Sundays?

There's a lot happening behind the scenes! Our Worship Service & ENGAGE Sunday programming team has been busy planning meaningful services, exciting events, and opportunities for our community to gather, connect, and grow. Keep an eye on your inbox! Detailed information about each upcoming service and event will be shared by email as the dates get closer, including what to expect and how you can participate. We're looking forward to all that's ahead and we hope you'll join us!

Oct.-Dec. Calendar of Services & Events At-a-Glance

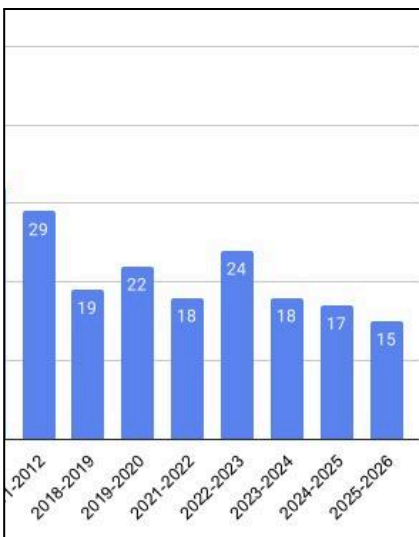
SERVICE	DATE	TITLE	LEADER(S)
ENGAGE	10/4/26	<i>Gather, Share & Listen - A Fireside chat</i>	Pat Dobrinska & Sherman Leatherberry
Worship	10/11/26	<i>People we should emulate</i>	Jill Stiemsma
ENGAGE	10/18/26	<i>Beyond the Single Story</i>	Kathryn Severson
Worship	10/25/26	Meditation Part 1	Robyn Davis Bartow
ENGAGE	11/1/26	<i>Journey from Ego to Consciousness</i>	Diane Rutsch
Worship	11/8/26	Meditation Part 2	Robyn Davis Bartow
ENGAGE	11/15/26	<i>Values, Spirit and Discipline</i>	Sherman Leatherberry
Worship	11/22/26	The Sunday before Thanksgiving: Title TBA	Becky Feyen
5th Sunday	11/29/26	Fluff 'N Buff Cleanup Day	Everyone who would like to participate
ENGAGE	12/6/26	Political Science topic	Henrik Schatzinger
Worship	12/13/26	Festivals of Light	Jill & Tanya
ENGAGE	12/20/26	TBA	TBA
Worship	12/27/26	Labyrinth	Robyn

Showing Up for Our Community

Our UU Fellowship is something we create together. Sunday worship, music, coffee-hour conversations, learning, laughter, and simply being present all help make this a vibrant community.

Over the past several years, we've seen some changes in attendance. It's a good opportunity to reconnect and remember that every person who joins us adds something important to our shared community.

If you've been away for a while, we'd love to see you again. If you're already part of our Sunday gatherings, consider inviting a friend. Come as you are, participate in the ways that feel meaningful to you, and help us continue building a welcoming and vibrant Fellowship together.



The full attendance graph and additional information can be found in the Annual Report.

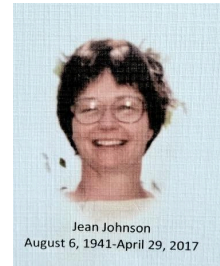
IN CASE YOU MISSED IT IN SEPTEMBER

5th Annual Jean Johnson Memorial Kayak Event on Sunday, September 6

Our final off-site event of the summer was a special gathering at beautiful Spring Lake in memory of Jean.

We enjoyed a beautiful morning on the water kayaking/canoeing, followed by a meal and time together around the picnic table. Becky read the words she shared at Jean's memorial service in 2017, and we listened to Jean's favorite song, Blue Boat Home.

Thank you to PLUUF friend, Chris Meurer, for snapping the group photo, and to both Chris and Helen Meurer for bringing extra kayaks.



Worship Service Sunday, September 13, Plus Potluck: [Annual Water Sharing/In-Gathering \(Intergenerational\)](#) 💧

Our annual Water Sharing Ceremony was especially meaningful this year as we welcomed our members back, plus introduced ourselves to a few newcomers.

We shared water, stories, memories, and reflections on what each offering meant to us. As our waters came together, so did our individual journeys, creating a beautiful reminder of the community we share. We're grateful to everyone who participated and especially happy to welcome our new friends.

Note: The photo shows the shared water being returned to the earth.



ENGAGE Sunday, September 20: [The Afterlife in World Religions and How to Prepare for It](#) with Brian Smith We were delighted to welcome back Brian Smith, a much-loved professor emeritus of religion at Ripon College for a thoughtful presentation on "Life After Death in World Religions and How to Prepare for It."

Drawing on Indigenous traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, he explored the many ways religions have wrestled with one of humanity's oldest questions: What happens after we die? It was a fascinating reminder of the rich diversity of human beliefs and of how much we share in our desire to understand life, death, and what may lie beyond. A special thank-you to Becky Feyen, for helping create such a welcoming start to our first ENGAGE Sunday gathering of the fiscal year.



The helpful staff and volunteers at the food pantry took a quick break from their busy day to smile for the camera. We're grateful for all they do to serve our community! ❤️

Worship Service Sunday, September 27, [Harvest Sharing Celebration with Becky Feyen](#)

A beautiful Harvest Sharing service! 🍂 Though our gathering was small, the generosity was abundant. Becky led a beautiful service celebrating the gifts of the harvest, and those who attended brought a wonderful bounty of food to share with the Ripon Community Food Pantry. A lovely reminder that even a small gathering can make a big difference.