

JANUARY 2026

the **VOICE**

Practicing Resistance



PEOPLES CHURCH
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

MINISTER MUSINGS



What do we love sooooo much?

by Rev. Carin Bringelson

This month's theme of Practicing Resistance invites us to explore both our hearts and our hands.

The great African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass is quoted in our grey hymnal (#579) as saying, "Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are people who want ... rain without thunder and lightning ... This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never did and it never will. Find out what people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice which will be imposed upon them. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."

I agree that strong limitations must be placed on tyrants. As a people of faith, we are called to agitate for freedom, struggle against oppression, and demand justice. Contemporary artist Dalia Shevin reminds us to fight for what we love in her screen print, which states, "Your heart is a muscle the size of your fist. Keep loving. Keep fighting."

As Unitarian Universalists who value justice, equity, and pluralism, we are being called to resist the oppressive forces in the name of a liberating Love, recalling that our interdependence connects us to one and all, large and small.

Practicing Resistance isn't something to do alone – it's a communal endeavor. That's why we have each other at Peoples Church. It's a place where we gather to

recommit to all that we hold dear – and remember what we value so much that it's worth fighting for.

As we center Love, may we – with integrity – live compassionate lives through spiritual growth and just action. In other words, may we keep loving and keep fighting.

I look forward to Practicing Resistance with you in 2026.

Growing in Faith,

Rev. Carin



SERVICES & FORUMS

Sunday, January 4, 2026

- “Move Over, Luke Skywalker: Resistance in 2026” at 11:00 a.m.

Led by PCUU member, Kathleen Mavity — As a new year begins, we face an uncomfortable truth: If we’re serious about living our UU values, we each get to step up and assume the mantle of resistance fighters. Fortunately, that doesn’t mean we have to strap on an X-wing fighter like Luke Skywalker did. It does mean we get to identify both internal and external situations we want to change, then start taking baby steps to do just that. Let’s get the new year off to a powerful start by exploring how.

Sunday, January 11, 2026

- “Forum: Escucha Mi Voz” at 9:45 a.m.

Hosted by the Social Justice Team, join us for this forum with representatives from Escucha Mi Voz.

- “Following Their Lead” at 11:00 a.m.

Led by Rev. Carin Bringelson — Today we will bless the quilt lovingly created by this congregation for our Faith Formation program’s Iowa Sisterhood room. Young people have often been at the forefront of social change movements. As we center the perspectives of those most impacted, we’ll consider what we might learn by following their lead. Join the Social Justice Team before service to interact with a representative from Escucha Mi Voz Iowa.

Sunday, January 18, 2026

- “Social Change Now” at 9:45 a.m.

Led by Interim Director of Faith Formation, join us for this forum exploring the book by Deepa Iyer.

- “Don’t Make Me Repeat Myself” at 11:00 a.m.

Led by PCUU member, Deborah Booth — With the current administration, we find ourselves going backward. The progress we made as a nation, as a people, has reversed its course. Laws are being repealed, freedoms are being removed, and our future doesn’t look great. Let’s look at our history and what we needed to do to move forward so that we do not repeat the mistakes previously made.

Sunday, January 25, 2026

- “When You Say We” at 11:00 a.m.

Led by Rev. Carin Bringelson — The work and joy of practicing resistance is a communal endeavor – not one to engage with in isolation or as an individual. Working collaboratively – against the individualistic tendencies of the dominant culture – can be both a challenge and a liberating gift. Today we’ll explore what it means to say “we” and mean “one more.”

BOARD PRESIDENT



How Might Practicing Resistance at the Board Table Help Cultivate Courage, Accountability, and Hope Through the Wider Congregation?

by Robyn Miessler-Kubanek

Last month, we explored Choosing Hope—not as a fleeting feeling but as an action. We act together to keep hope alive and sustain us as we Practice Resistance.

Resistance is not defiance for its own sake; it's a spiritual discipline that keeps us anchored in compassion, justice, and truth when fear or complacency tempt us to drift. If hope gets us started, resistance keeps us focused.

At the Board table, resistance through governance becomes the spiritual practice of showing up, listening deeply, and balancing care with conviction. It means resisting fear-based decisions, scarcity stories, and the urge to play it safe. When we presented the 2026 deficit budget, we invited the congregation to practice resistance—not against reality, but against retreat from our shared work and mission.

Mindful resistance reaches far beyond the Board. It shows up whenever leaders slow down to ask better questions, practice transparency even when conversations are hard, and name truth without despair. In those everyday choices, we resist distrust, urgency, and disconnection by choosing community, presence, and hope instead.

We live this out through our Sacred Conversations initiative. Over the summer, many of you shared stories, hopes, joys, and concerns. Each conversation deepened our bonds and reminded us that connection itself is holy work. Now the steering team is discerning the themes and energy in those stories—what might otherwise remain unseen.

In a culture that rushes past complexity, choosing to slow down and listen deeply is a radical act. In an age of fear, polarization, and loneliness, Peoples Church offers another way: a living laboratory for compassionate resistance. Here, we experiment, learn, adapt, and stay true to our values, even when it's hard.

As we practice resistance together, we also cultivate what comes next: resilience. Hope moves us forward, resistance keeps us grounded, and resilience helps us endure with grace. February's theme, Embodying Resilience, will explore how these practices grow into lasting strength and flexibility. Together, we do more than face change—we shape it with courage, integrity, and hope.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



How Can Peoples' People Practice Resistance

by Kathleen Mavity for the Social Justice Team

With so much injustice to resist, what can you do to develop or reinvigorate your resistance superpowers?

- ✓ If you're a newbie, **baby-step your way into it.** Even "just" making a sign for someone else to carry makes the resistance more powerful.
- ✓ **Pick a lane and stay in it.** As one YouTuber puts it, "Resistance isn't a country road; it's a super-highway. You don't have to be in every lane every day. Pick one and commit to taking consistent action in that lane."
- ✓ **Allow yourself to have some fun with it.** Who says you can't show up to a demonstration wearing an inflatable frog costume?
- ✓ **Choose hope.** Notice all the others like yourself who are courageously resisting what's unjust.
- ✓ **Embrace your power.** Remember that even pebbles create ripples, and enough ripples can turn into a flood.
- ✓ **Remember that this all ends when enough of us say NO.**

FAITH FORMATION



What Are You Resisting — and Why?

by Interim Director of Faith Formation, Bridget Laflin

Our January theme at PCUU is Practicing Resistance—an invitation to explore not only how we push against the world, but also how we push against the forces within ourselves.

Anyone who has lived with a toddler in the “terrible twos,” or a teenager perfecting the art of the sigh, knows that resistance is a natural part of growing up. For children, resistance is often a doorway to independence: I can do it myself; I’m learning who I am. Even when challenging, these moments are milestones of growth.

Adults experience our own forms of resistance, too. As children and youth grow more capable, we may find they are ready to take on challenges faster than we are ready to step back. We resist their growing independence. We resist changes in our roles. We resist the truth that growth always requires us to shift, too. Sometimes letting go can feel harder than holding on.

These ordinary experiences hold a spiritual lesson: resistance is not always something to defeat. Sometimes it protects our integrity or reminds us what matters most. Other times, resistance keeps us stuck in fear or habit, long after it has served its purpose. This month, we are invited to notice our resistance with curiosity and compassion.

Which forms of resistance help us set boundaries and claim our values?

Which forms keep us from necessary change?

Where might practicing resistance mean standing firm—and where might it mean letting go?

Practicing resistance is not only about saying “no.” It is also about learning when to say “yes,” ask for help, or trust that loosening our grip doesn’t mean giving up. It is about responding with intention rather than reacting from fear.

We don’t have to figure this out alone. In community, we get to practice together—supporting one another as we build resilience, release old patterns, and model loving, grounded resistance in a world that needs both courage and compassion.

I look forward to practicing with you this month.

SACRED LISTENING



by Laura McGraw, Chair

I have been serving as chair of the Sacred Listening Team for the past six months. The team includes David Miessler-Kubanek, Kathleen Mavity, and Susan Petersmith. What follows is a brief review of the project so far, along with an update on where we are in the three-phase process.

Phase 1: Sacred Listening

We want to begin by thanking all of the listeners and story-tellers who agreed to participate in this project. In total, 13 listeners met one-on-one with approximately 52 story-tellers.

Based on feedback from those conversations, this phase was a very positive experience for those involved. Connecting with other congregants on a deeper level proved to be a meaningful and different way of ministering than what we have typically done.

These conversations felt deeper for two main reasons. First, listeners were trained to ask courageous questions—following up on what was shared with thoughtful, probing questions that invited reflection beyond what might happen in more casual conversations. Second, listeners were trained to truly listen. Many of us find it difficult not to insert our own stories or perspectives, but in these conversations the story-teller remained at the center of the experience. This kind of focused listening allowed space for stories to unfold fully and be heard with care and intention.

Phase 2: Discernment

We are now embarking on Phase 2, the Discernment Phase. While we have received guidance from the Gamaliel organization, each congregation approaches discernment in a way that fits its own context.

Our Steering Team has been meeting to review what was shared across all of the conversations. While the information gathered is not anonymous, we are not analyzing individual stories. Instead, we are looking for broader themes—shared interests, passions, concerns, and common threads that help us better understand who we are as a congregation and what matters most to our community.

We are reviewing stories and reflecting on their meaning, asking what they reveal about Peoples Church and what actions they might call us toward.

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SACRED LISTENING



by Laura McGraw, Chair

Phase 3: Design and Implementation

The next step will be Phase 3: Design and Implementation. The Gamaliel organization focuses primarily on community organizing, and we are considering what this work might mean both for growth and change within Peoples Church and for potential partnerships with other congregations to effect change in the wider community.

Any ideas or proposals that emerge from this phase will be discussed with the Board of Directors and then shared openly with the congregation before decisions are made.

As part of our ongoing discernment, we are also discussing how best to invite broader congregational participation in the conversation. Please watch upcoming communications for opportunities to engage more fully in this next phase of Sacred Listening.

If you have questions or comments about this process, we welcome them and invite you to be in touch.



3 CUUPS Full Moon Ritual at 6:30 p.m.

4 Worship at 11:00 a.m.

6 Building & Grounds at 2:00 p.m.

8 Worship Arts at 6:30 p.m.

11 Forum: Escucha Mi Voz, Iowa at 9:45 a.m.

Faith Formation at 9:45 a.m.

Worship at 11:00 a.m.

13 Archives at 10:00 p.m.

Faith Formation Council at 7:00 p.m.

18 Forum: Social Change Now at 9:45 a.m.

Worship at 11:00 a.m.

CUUPS at 12:20 p.m.

20 Finance Team at 7:00 p.m.

21 Social Justice at 1:00 p.m.

22 Board of Trustees at 6:30 p.m.

24 Journey Circle at 10:00 a.m.

25 Faith Formation at 9:45 a.m.

Worship at 11:00 a.m.

26 Rev. Carin Away on Study Leave through Feb. 2nd.

27 Journey Circle at 6:00 p.m.

PEOPLES CHURCH

MISSION STATEMENT

“Leading compassionate lives through spiritual growth and just action.”

BOARD of TRUSTEES

President

Robyn Miessler-Kubanek

Bob Butikofer

Emily Hoselton

Linda Levy

Josh Wagner

Lu Wilcox

Ex Officio

Rev. Carin Bringelson

Gary McGraw, Treasurer



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