



## From the Administrator,

Welcome to the newsletter for the **Fifteenth of January**. You will find contributions from Dave Siegfried, Nick Schweitzer, Gilbert Williams, Anonymous, and the UU Women's Connection. I hope you will find them interesting. Please let me know if I can be of assistance. My Park Hall hours are Tuesday and Friday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and by appointment. Park Hall Voicemail: 608.643.3131 **Fritz Parks**

## Upcoming Sunday Programs (10:10 a.m.)

Date	Program	Speaker	Topic
Jan 18	U.U. Program	Rob Brink	Foragers, Farmers, and Fossil Fuels
Jan 25	Painesfest Program & Potluck	Prof. Dan Kapust	Common Sense 1 Samuel
Feb 1	Spiritual Roundtable	All attending	Birds of a Feather: Friends & Family

We invite you to attend our in-person Sunday programs at our beautiful Park Hall. We have masks available. Childcare is provided each Sunday. Our Sunday programs are also available live on Zoom (see last page info).

## Board of Directors Meeting

The **Board** of the Free Congregation will meet on **February 8 at Park Hall at 11:30 a.m.** If you have an issue for us to an address, please email Dave Siegfried, President of the Board at [davewsiegfried@gmail.com](mailto:davewsiegfried@gmail.com) so that it may be added to the agenda.

## What I Believe Now

The Adult Ed discussion group, **What I Believe Now**, will meet **on Zoom** as usual on the fourth **Monday, January 26, at 6:30 p.m.** The topic will be: **Freedom**. Please email **Nick Schweitzer**, [jnschweitzer@gmail.com](mailto:jnschweitzer@gmail.com), if you'd like to receive a meeting invitation and list of questions in preparation for the gathering.

## 174th Painesfest Holiday Program and Potluck

We welcome **Guest Speaker Dan Kapust** for our **174th Painesfest Holiday**. The program topic will be **Common Sense** (Paine's invocation of 1 Samuel). In his book **Common Sense**, **Thomas Paine** argued against monarchy; surprisingly, this argument employed a revolutionary and innovative use of scripture, specifically this verse: 1 Samuel 8. Dr. Kapust suggests this article: [Biblical Basis for the Divine Right of Kings](#) for background.

Dr. Daniel Kapust is the **Judith Hicks Stiehm Professor of Political Theory** in the **Department of Political Science** at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is also the Director of the College of Letters & Science Honors Program. This is his 3rd presentation at Painesfest, our celebration of the birth of Thomas Paine, an American revolutionary whose writings on liberty, democracy, and the separation of church and state were especially influential among German Free Thought groups. Author of **Common Sense**, he is considered an American Founding Father. First celebrated in January 1853, we commemorate Paine's life each January.



The program starts at 10:10 a.m.

A potluck meal will follow the program. Members may bring food as suggested by last name: S-Z desserts A-K salads L-R entree dishes. The public is invited to “come as you are”, with a healthy appetite. We always have enough food. You may find instructions on joining the program on Zoom, on the last page of this newsletter.

## March Grounds Work Days

The grounds subcommittee will be sponsoring 3 work days in March. They will be on **Fridays (March 6, 13, 20)** from **10 am to 2 pm**. Our kitchen crew (“the Kitchees”) will be serving a **free hot lunch for volunteers**. To set goals for this work; please join the discussion by sending email: “I am in on the Grounds Work Days” to Gilbert Williams at [earthdogghw@gmail.com](mailto:earthdogghw@gmail.com). For starters, we will clear the fallen leaves and improve the front of the Hall appearance. We also need to clear some fallen wood from the back 40. Participants are asked to bring their favorite rake, leaf blower, pitch fork, wheelbarrow or chain saw. A riding lawn mower would be a big help. Subject to proper weather.

Please RSVP to let Gilbert know which days you will be attending, to check the weather, and so that the Kitchees can plan for lunch. [earthdogghw@gmail.com](mailto:earthdogghw@gmail.com).

## Learning to Hope in Dark Times

A member writes: "I was fortunate to be at this past week's program on "Learning to Hope in Dark Times", given by our **Associate Speaker David Butler**. He began the program by reading a lovely children's story that - like all the best children's stories - spoke to the adults. The story was **Something, Someday**, written by **Amanda Gorman** and illustrated by **Christian Robinson**. The story shows children how small, positive actions can - even if it might take a while - bring about positive changes.



"Then David Butler gave an uplifting and useful program based on the book **Hope for Cynics**, by **Jamil Zaki**. The program focused on how to best manage the tsunami of bad news we are getting about our nation's direction these days.

"I was helped by listening, because for me these have been dark times. I have friends and family directly in the path of this ICE crackdown on (and invasion of) the Twin City area. The recent murder - 3 bullets to the face at close range - of an unarmed, non-confrontational, American woman who was serving as a "watcher" of a rough ICE action in her neighborhood - has me very disheartened and fearful for our nation's future.

"ICE, the newly beefed up arm of America's law enforcement wing, appears to have unleashed ill-trained, unbalanced, heavily armed, angry men (mainly) into our city streets to fill quotas of people apprehended. Due process is ignored, and basic, long standing rules regarding when, where, and how to use of deadly force have clearly been jettisoned.

"And which cities are most often targeted for action by these masked men that operate without warrants, do not read rights to people, seldom (if ever) wear body cameras, and intimidate bystanders? The cities invaded are the American cities that have dared to challenge the current Republican regime.

"I fear for my adult children and my friends who might get swept up in, or hurt by, these ICE agents if they are just passing by, or daring to protest these raids. This invasion of the Twin Cities has hurt more than individuals. It hurts major institutions like hospitals, schools, libraries, and churches who struggle to know how to care for and protect the people who rely on them. Who do these institutions that represent the best of our urban centers call when ICE crashes in, chaos and fear erupt, and they know that the Federal gov't agencies under President Trump have denied local and state governments the right to have their own policing departments rein in, or investigate, the illegal, intimidating actions being taken by ICE in these public places?

"These are dark times. But my friends and family up in the Twin Cities area say they are made hopeful by the support they are getting from friends, family, and the outside world. Those are "something's" that will "someday" force out the evil, and bring back the light."  
Anonymous

## UU Women's Connection Events

**Women's Connection Winter 2026 Retreat** This beloved annual gathering invites women from across the MidAmerica Region to come together for a rejuvenating weekend of community, reflection, and restoration in a peaceful natural setting. From **February 27 to March 1** at the **Toddhall Retreat Center** near Columbia, Illinois, just south of St. Louis. More at <https://uuwf.org/>.

**Virtual Tea & Talk** Bring your beverage of choice and join your sisters for a chat on Zoom. Five of these events will occur in 2026. The **first Tea & Talk** will be **March 21**. Click for the [event web page and Zoom link](#). More at <https://uuwf.org/>.

## How to join Zoom for our Sunday Programs.

1. Go to the Sunday Programs tab of our website:  
<http://www.freecongregation.org/sunday-programs.aspx>
2. Refresh the browser page.
3. Click the “**Join Our Zoom Meeting**” link in RED TEXT.

The “**Join Our Zoom Meeting**” link will not be visible until 15 minutes before our meeting; typically this is 9:55 a.m. for a 10:10 a.m. meeting. Early birds will see the option to “**Join a Practice Zoom Meeting**”. Refreshing the page after 9:55 a.m. should reveal the active meeting link.

We publish twice a month to our website. We email announcements to our list as each issue appears online. If you no longer desire email reminders, feel free to tidy up our email list with an unsubscribe message. Keep our website bookmarked for future use.

[FreeCongregation.org](http://FreeCongregation.org) our website homepage

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I welcome your submissions to this newsletter. Send your events, announcements, photos, and recipes to me. [Newsletter Submissions](#) use the Contact Us form at bottom.