

The Free Congregation of Sauk County
A Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

The Mystery of Bird Migration

174th Fruhlingsfest Program

May 17, 2026

Bill Volkert, Guest Speaker

Welcome and Announcements	Fritz Parks
Introduction of Guest Speaker	Ellen Paul
Presentation: The Mystery of Bird Migration	Bill Volkert
Congregational Dialogue:	All
Closing:	Ellen

Bill worked as the naturalist and wildlife educator for the Department of Natural Resources at Horicon Marsh for 27 years, where he has conducted more than 3,700 education programs for over 220,000 people. His broad audiences have included 66 delegations of scientists from 43 countries. Bill has has sighted more than 4,900 species. He is a federally licensed master bird bander. He is known on Wisconsin Public Radio for more than 30 years as Wisconsin's bird expert. Connie and Bill make their home in the northern Kettle Moraine area of east-central Wisconsin.

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A Little About Us,

This congregation began as the Freie Gemeinde (The Free Congregation) in 1852. Its founders—most of whom came to the United States from the German states and principalities after the failed liberal revolutions of the 1840s—were seeking freedom to practice their beliefs, express their thoughts, and search for the truth without interference from government and church. Park Hall, still known locally as Freethinkers Hall, was constructed in 1884, designed by Sauk City born architect Alfred Clas.

Of the many Free Congregations established in America by free-thinking German immigrants in the 19th century, most did not survive the First World War and the pervasive anti-German prejudice that accompanied it. Only a dozen or so Free Congregations survived World War II. In 1955, faced with declining numbers and an aging membership, our congregation affiliated with the American Unitarian Association, a movement for liberal religious thought and practice. In 1961 the Unitarian Association and the Universalist Denomination merged, and we took on the name that we bear today: The Free Congregation of Sauk County—a Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

Our values and the diversity of our heritage are reflected in the programs and services that we hold at Park Hall. The 2nd and 4th Sunday programs generally follow a UU order of service. These include reflections by our Speaker, a visiting UU minister, or other guest. The first Sunday of the month we hold a roundtable Spiritual Reflection Hour on a variety of topics. The Third Sunday is our Free Thought Forum, in which a guest presenter engages an historical, cultural, philosophical, or social issue of special significance to this free religious community. Child care is provided every Sunday.

Upcoming Sunday Programs

Date	Program	Speaker	Topic
May 24	U.U. Program	Rob Proud	Dorothea Dix
June 31	5th Sunday	All invited	Work Day
June 7	Spiritual Roundtable	All present	Tradition



We are proud to support our LGBTQ members and friends.