

Dear Members and Friends,

February 21, 2008

I often type over the previous newsletter when preparing a new one, so I couldn't help but notice that my parting words to you three weeks ago, before the newsletter went on hiatus, were "Stay warm and keep the home fires burning!" A surefire way, if ever there was one, to incite the poltergeists to mess with the Park Hall furnace! And to encourage the weather gods to cook up a three-week pot of record-breaking winter stew! It may be hard to believe, but Gigi and I actually bemoaned the fact that we were missing the winter's biggest storm (on February 6th). Thank goodness Mother Nature saved a 9-incher for our first day home last Sunday!

When I called to inform Andrew Kerr, our scheduled Free Thought Forum speaker, that we were cancelling, I found him not at his home in rural Dodgeville but at the Cedarberry Inn in Sauk City! He and his wife, Jennifer, and their children had driven there Saturday night ahead of the storm, in order to be sure not to miss Andrew's speaking engagement!

Thanks to Beth Persche, Sue Anderson, and others who hit the phones early Sunday morning to let people know of the cancellation. And to Jack Ferver for standing sentinel at the Hall in case anyone showed up. Fred Clark and Rob Nelson showed up! It turns out that Fred had come in for an early appointment with Sherri Shulz ... sadly, to have his dog, Pep – close companion for 16 years – put down. Our heartfelt sympathies to Fred on the loss of his best gal. – Michael

“Introduction to the Free Congregation” this Saturday Morning

Whether you're a new member, possible member-to-be, interested friend of the Free Congregation, or just plain curious, you are cordially invited to learn more about this one-of-a-kind religious community this Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Membership chair and longtime member (and past-President) John Lichtenheld will team up with FCSC Administrator Michael Whaley and an as yet unnamed board member to provide an introduction and overview of the congregation's history and current operation. Although they'll be working from a modest agenda, please think of this as a friendly and informal conversation and question-answering session. It is intended for new members, people considering membership, and people who are just interested in learning more about how the Free Congregation works, runs, and plays. This is not a membership sign-up session, and no pressure will be exerted in that respect. Coffee, tea, and snacks will be provided. If at all possible, please let Michael know you're planning to attend: spikeboy@earthlink.net or 608-588-2048.

This Sunday at Park Hall: “Spirituality and Trauma”

This Sunday our guest speaker will be Jean McElhaney, who will explore the ways psychological trauma can affect spirituality and spirituality can affect trauma. She will look at what we mean by “spirituality” and offer examples of how it can be a resource for healing. She will also suggest ways trauma can be a gateway to the spiritual. The talk will include theory and research, real-life examples, meditation and poetry. Jean is eager to interact with us and welcomes questions and comments.

Jean is a psychotherapist who works part-time at Pauquette Psychological Services in Prairie du Sac and part-time at Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center in Mauston. In addition, she has a strong interest in spiritual activism, particularly related to peace and nonviolence. She's available to give workshops related to nonviolence, communication, trauma, stress management, emotional intelligence, and the like. She is currently a student with One Spirit Interfaith Seminary. In recent years she's also been excited to study Nonviolent Communication (NVC) because of its contribution to creating the more compassionate world she longs to live in.

Still Two Dance Lessons Left... Right? Right!

Last week's dance class was snowed out, so it Waltzes into this Sunday's spot. And Country Two-Step neatly slides into the 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. space on Sunday, March 2nd.

Upcoming Programs and Events at Park Hall

Sunday, February 24, 10:00am – UU Service – “Spirituality and Trauma” with guest speaker Jean McElhaney. (see article above)

Sunday, March 2, 10:00am – Spiritual Reflection Hour – Reece Donihi will facilitate a roundtable discussion and sharing on the topic of “Gossip: What’s It Really About?”

Notes from Members and Friends

“Between Fences”

Be sure to get to the River Arts Center to see the Smithsonian Museum's touring exhibition of *Between Fences*. FCSC member Ellen Paul is coordinating this very special program for River Arts. The exhibit runs from February 23 to April 5.

***The Artist's Way* Class Offered**

Please see enclosed/attached flyer.

A Meditation Intensive at Sacred Circles Sanctuary

Led by Casandra May. Saturdays, April 5 and 19, 10am to 3pm. These two four-hour group sessions will focus on the basics of Buddhist teaching and the practice of Loving-Kindness. \$85, includes materials. For more info, call 608-393-2799, or write to casandra@merr.com

CaSandra is also offering a **Full-Day Meditation Retreat** on Sunday, April 27 from 9am to 5pm. This is designed for those with prior meditation experience who want to participate in a day-long silent retreat. \$50.