



Cherokee Park United Church

Fierce Justice ✨ Radical Love ✨ Abundant Grace
a Progressive Congregation

*Welcoming people of all ages, sexual orientations,
races, and ethnic origins*

Theological Elbow Room
Global Music
Community Connected
Kid Friendly

Newsletter ~ January 2026

This newsletter is also posted on our website; for safety and privacy, last names and personal contact information is omitted. That version is also sent, upon request, to various native inmates in Pennsylvania who greatly appreciate our attention, respect, and our work to obtain and retain rights to their spiritual practices.



The Palm Sunday Path (not your ordinary Palm Sunday)

CPUC will join hundreds of other faith communities in Minnesota and beyond in a massive Palm Sunday (March 29) parade/march reminding people what Jesus' life and message is. Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, a symbol of a just, humble leader whose ministry centered the dignity and needs of the children of God, healed the sick, fed the hungry, and welcomed the stranger. Historians tell us Roman authorities entered Jerusalem at the same time to show the power of the Roman Empire and to control this freedom festival. Jesus provoked and drew a contrast. We will too. We will proclaim our vision for a more just society, lead faithful public actions, and march. We will proclaim God's values in contrast to the dominant politics of hate, greed, and injustice. We will be the hands and feet of Christ.

The clergy coalition of ISAIAH, a grassroots MN social justice organization, is providing leadership and training to galvanize an effective response to our current democracy crisis. We will be present at state caucuses and community meetings. We will speak with our friends about the existence and actions of this movement. We will walk to the state capital Palm Sunday afternoon. People and institutions of faith across the country will lead a national Prophetic Faith Action on July 3, 2026 in Philadelphia.

What History and Research Tell Us:

Mass protests are essential but insufficient. Courageous demonstrations must be paired with disciplined, organized power rooted in lasting institutions.

Authoritarianism can be defeated only when ordinary people act together through strategic campaigns that develop leaders and sustain engagement.

The most decisive period is the first 18 months after an authoritarian tries to consolidate power.

January has several dates and places for a two-hour training. It is empowering to be part of the solution! For more information contact Sandy Dodson or Pastor Matthias.

CPUC annual meeting

February 8, Sunday

The agenda at this meeting, held immediately after worship, includes receiving the proposed church budget and electing new Lay Ministry members.

A Message from Pastor Matthias



Dear CPUC,

It has been chilling to see the news of ICE roaming the streets of the twin cities metro, intimidating, harassing, and arresting our neighbors and bystanders. The violence of it is by design, and it is unequivocally opposed to our faith in a non-violent Christ who resists Empire without succumbing to the lure of “might makes right.”

At the same time, the people have risen up with joy and energy to protect one another and document the atrocities. This is indeed the only solution—overwhelming evil with persistent good and nonviolent resistance. Otherwise we risk becoming the very thing we abhor. A bee on its own is an easy target, but when the hive is threatened dealing with a swarm is a daunting prospect indeed.

Creative nonviolence has long been an effective tool for justice. Often it can be coupled with humor.

Some agitators have discovered at which hotels ICE agents are staying, and gone at early hours of the morning with cymbals, drums, and megaphones to march outside raising a holy ruckus to disrupt their rest. It serves the secondary purpose of highlighting hotels who are complicit supporting ICE agents.

Others have flooded hotlines set up for callers to make reports to ICE and inform on their neighbors. Calls have poured into ICE hotlines reporting a child named “Anne Frank” or leaving messages reporting the Holy Family. These efforts throw sand in the cogs a cruel machine while drawing timely parallels that highlight the immorality of ICE’s actions.

As we enter a new year, the Christmas season still fresh as I write this, we are reminded that indeed Jesus’ family were immigrants and became refugees, fleeing Herod’s violence. As followers of that Christ, we continue in our daily lives to honor the dignity of our immigrant neighbors, seek to protect them and extend care to them, while we work for a world where that dignity and care are enshrined in how our government operates.

Blessings to you and yours for flourishing in 2026,

Pastor Matthias



Notes from December's Council Meeting...

- Pastor Matthias reported he is recovering well from the bacteria-induced stomach ulcer for which he was hospitalized in early December. He worked with the Harvest SST on Gratitude Sunday in November and on Advent services and activities as he could this month. He is helping prepare for the reading of the *Seasons of the Spirit* Nativity story in worship on Dec. 21st. (He reminded us Kay helped write this piece and is now facilitating it at CPUC!) Christmas Eve worship is at 5 pm. He also met with the Renewing SST early in the month.
- The annual meeting of CPUC will be held on Sunday, February 8, 2026 after worship. The proposed church budget will be presented and new Lay Ministry members elected.
- The By-Law change for the Lay Ministries Team approved at the Dec. 7 congregational meeting necessitates a change in the way members are nominated and serve. One member from the church Council will be named each January. The other four members will each serve two-year terms, with two new members nominated at the congregation's annual meeting each year. The Lay Ministry Team suggested and the Council approved a transition to the new structure. Current team members Alicia and Mike will serve through 2026 and complete their terms at the annual meeting in 2027. Two new members who will serve until the meeting in 2028 will be elected at the Feb. 8 meeting.
- Council approved (with some revisions) the job description from the Personnel Team for the part-time Administrative Support position. The Team will advertise the job in January and will bring the names of any recommended candidates to the Council when they are ready.
- Barb and Jill reported on attending the annual meeting of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area on December 6.
- Pastor reported that the organizing group for the Facilitating Racial Equity Collaborative (FREC) in the Twin Cities is ending. A contractor has been hired to apply for some grants in 2026. If money is surfaced, some state-wide events may be offered in the future. If not, the organization will disband. Many thanks to the people from CPUC (especially Lynne and Mary B) who helped CPUC serve as fiduciary agent for FREC over the years. This collaborative had quite the impact after starting at a meeting at CPUC back in 2008!
- Lynne, accountant, reported that Ingrid is learning the *Servant Keeper* software and will be recording the incoming money at CPUC as Financial Secretary starting in January.

Kathy will be organizing the counters each week. Many thanks to Karen who is turning off her spreadsheets after many years of faithful service!

- Sandy D reported on plans for many churches to participate in a Palm Sunday March to the capital on March 29, 2026. ISALAH, a multi-race and multi-faith community organizing group, is conducting training events for the march in early 2026.
- With Pastor Matthias' thoughtful words highlighting their special gifts to CPUC, the Council thanked Jim, Tom, and Barb whose terms end this year.
- The next Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20, 2026.

If you would like to know more about any of these items in detail, the Council members would be glad to talk with you. The Council members through the end of 2025 are Sebastian, Barb, Kathy B, Tom, Jim, Maria, Sandy D, Lynne, and Jill.

Fonts Fonts

You may have noticed a change in the newsletter font selection in the past six months, from **Arial** to **Calibri**. The intent was to make this publication as readable as possible, both in print and on-line. And your feedback is always welcome. The previous Federal government administration also had switched from the age-old **Times New Roman** to **Calibri**, as a font more readable for people with vision limitations, which includes most elders.

However, the current administration has ordered the switch back to Times New Roman, as they feel that catering to the needs of any disabled group of people, is too "woke", too DEI!! And there is no research saying this change is a burden on anyone else - matter of fact ,it is probably better for everyone. Is this still a government for all people???

Meanwhile, [warning: sarcasm ahead] not to exclude people with hearing disabilities, the Trump administration wants to ban ASL interpretation for White House briefings as they "severely intrude" on his ability to control his image. (from *Associated Press*)

Loaves & Fishes

Our regular work session will not be held in January because L&F at St. Matt's will be closed for the Jan 1 holiday. Our next scheduled work session will be on **March 5**.

This does not mean we can't volunteer at St. Matt's on other days in January or February. They almost always can use help. Wouldn't want you to get out of practice or forget the location of St. Matt's if you were idle until March!



Dinner is served (again!)

January 26, Monday 5-8 pm

We are regularly supporting this audition-based Gospel choir of youth of color from North Minneapolis. Thanks to all who helped make our December 15th *KNOWN Mpls* dinner a success! We treated them to great home-made foods and they treated us to a bit of the rehearsal for their Christmas concert.

We are signed up to serve again on January 26th. Sign up during fellowship time or talk to Alicia or Pastor Matthias for more information.

More about food

Occasionally no one signs up to provide treats for Fellowship hour; but magically, things appear. If you could pinch hit on those occasions, just go into the kitchen and cut up and plate any Panera bakery that has arrived; then check the pantry to the right of the stove for things there that can (and should) be used up - crackers, cookies, pretzels, peanut butter, pink lemonade mix, chex mix. And/or, please help with clean up by bussing dishes to the dishwasher and wiping down tables.



Artwork from behind the bars

The image on the following page is similar to some of the Divine/Creator images we have projected on our walls in past years, in an effort to expand our understanding of God. It also contains nature images central to the spiritual life of the artist, Tony T., "Shadowhawk", and a recognition of the importance of all creation. This native brother is incarcerated in a state prison in Pennsylvania, and, as with all our contacts there, was introduced to us through Running River, from a brother he trusted, who in turn introduced us to other brothers, and so on. Many of you helped him with funds after he was sent to solitary confinement for his native activist efforts, and all his winter clothes were "lost" as an extra disciplinary measure, and at a time when the temperatures were headed below zero but the prison heat system not yet turned on... Wopida tanka! (Great thanks.) Some of the words he sent along with this piece are: *All religions come from the Creator, ... the people were sent in different directions and given different religions. The Creator knew that many of them would be distorted and used to justify man's greed and selfish desires and that is why it says to seek the truth because there are many truths in all religions. There is no one true religion. The truth is, that we are all God's children.*



There must be some mistake

Members and friends are always invited to submit writings and thoughts, not necessarily confined to information about a program or project in which we are currently involved. One member gave me permission to share these pieces she wrote, on how she felt as a child, and still sometimes is made to feel, as less, or an outsider, as her skin is not white. Many of us may not relate at all to this feeling; but we are now informed and are responsible to help stop this from happening.

There must be some mistake

Red haired, pasty teacher

The gate keeper of third grade souls

Who shall be saved?

Who shall be cast into the Hell of hapless idiots?

“There must be some mistake...” the red haired teacher said, confusion settling into her brows

“But I’m supposed to get on the bus to the Gifted and Talented program.....” would I be saved from the river of lost third grade souls, rippling waves of outcasts and not whites?

“I see your name on the list but it must be some mistake...”

“My mother said I’m supposed to get on the bus...”

“Well....that’s...for other kids..... you know special kids.....”

“But..my mother said I have to get on the bus to GATE program...” |

“Well your name is on the list but it has to be some mistake. Go sit down...”

I see them lining up , my heart finds the place where dreams die

There are no little brown girls in the line

Their white faces, their souls shall be saved

Pale Faces

They had pale faces and lips that parted in laughter

At me

They had pale faces, I looked like no one

Where is the place where chubby, brown girls learn to fly ?

I am invisible

all eyes on me

There is no in between

A ghostly little girl, who did not exist sitting at her desk, daydreaming about places where chubby, brown girls learn to fly



It is unfortunate that our democracy has crumbled into needing whistles to alert our citizens of the menacing presence of ICE; but good people everywhere are leaning into helping in any way they can. (Mischief Toy Store, 818 Grand Ave. St. Paul has free whistles.) This was attached to one of our pastor's Thursday Eblasts, in case you did not open it.



**TOGETHER,
WE KEEP OUR
COMMUNITY
SAFE.**

**FORM A CROWD,
STAY LOUD.**

This zine is ADAPTED from the original for use in the Twin Cities. Original info:



@PILSENARTSCOMMUNITYHOUSE
INFO@PILSENARTSCOMMUNITYHOUSE.ORG

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ON THE STREETS

WHISTLES GUIDE
PEOPLE TO:

- FOLLOW ICE CARAVANS
- CATCH UP WITH THE CROWD
- ALERT NEIGHBORS TO JOIN IN

NOISE = VISIBILITY.

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**CODE 1:
ICE NEARBY
BLOW IN A
BROKEN RHYTHM:
PRE-PRE-PRE-PRE!**

→ ALERTS THE
COMMUNITY THAT
ICE AGENTS ARE IN
THE AREA.

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**CODE 2:
CODE RED
BLOW IN A
CONTINUOUS,
STEADY RHYTHM:
→ ICE IS DETAINING SOMEONE.
FORM A CROWD,
STAY LOUD.
STAY NONVIOLENT.
DON'T STAY SILENT.**

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WHY IT WORKS

- LOUD. RECOGNIZABLE. IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE.
- **INSTANT ALERT SYSTEM**
- FASTER THAN SOCIAL MEDIA
- TURNS SILENCE INTO COMMUNITY ACTION

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

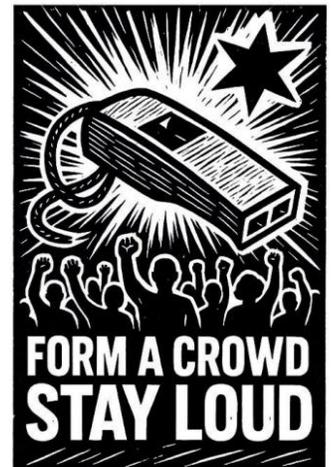
- WEAR YOUR WHISTLE AROUND YOUR NECK
- TEACH FAMILY & NEIGHBORS THE CODES
- USE IT WHEN ICE IS SPOTTED
- **PROTECT EACH OTHER, ALWAYS**

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This zine is ADAPTED from the original via Pilsen Arts & Community House. The content is the same; it just adds these Twin Cities-specific resources:

- **MONARCA Rapid Response Line:**
 - 612-441-2881
 - monarcamn.org
- **Unidos MN:** unidos-mn.org
- **MN Immigrant Rights Action Committee:** miracmn.com
- **Immigrant Law Center of MN:** ilcm.org
- **National Lawyers Guild MN:** nlgm.org
- **COPAL:** copalmn.org

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PROTECT EACH OTHER

Joyful memories from December 2025 to start us off in January 2026.
 Christmas dinner: never too many cooks in the kitchen! The star pointed the way.
 Gingerbread church tasted good!



And, how many pounds of turkey was that?



Nativity story retold...



and of course, more bubbles.



Newsletter

Please submit articles by the 22nd of preceding month to kellystrebig@comcast.net (or contact if an extension is needed)
 Editor: Susan Strebig
 Proofreader: Mary
 Collator: Kathy B

January Birthdays

- 05 - Sandy S
- 05 - Bjorn
- 08 - Sandy W
- 19 - Brad

(This list was compiled very informally; please inform editor if there are others that we could add.)

*Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service*



Cherokee Park United Church
United Church of Christ/Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Open & Affirming, Multicultural, Antiracist
371 W. Baker Street
St. Paul MN 55107

Sunday Worship 10:15 am, online and in person
<https://www.facebook.com/cherokeeparkchurch/live>
Pastor: Rev. Matthias Peterson-Brandt
651-227-4275
cpuc@usfamily.net
cherokeeparkunited.org

*The Lord is born
when at any time
we bring love to birth
Donal Neary, SJ*