



# The VOICE



## Pastor's Message



Dear Falkner Swamp Friends & Family,  
 And so it begins. Lists swirl in our heads: food to purchase for feasts, beds to prepare for guests, gifts to order and fetch and wrap, donations to honor for those in need. The turkey platter is carefully dried and put up while the halls wait to be decked. Everything on time and within a budget, we nervously say to ourselves. The news continues apace of lewd scandals and abhorrent violence. Where is there light amidst this darkness?  
 And so it begins.

A girl tells her family she is pregnant, after an angel visited her and told her she'd carry God's son. She assents to this plan, sensing that she has a choice. Engaged but not married in a world where females are property, the girl has to trust her family and her fiancé not to shut her out. The waiting: will I be shunned? Forced to flee, out on the streets? Where is there light amidst this darkness?

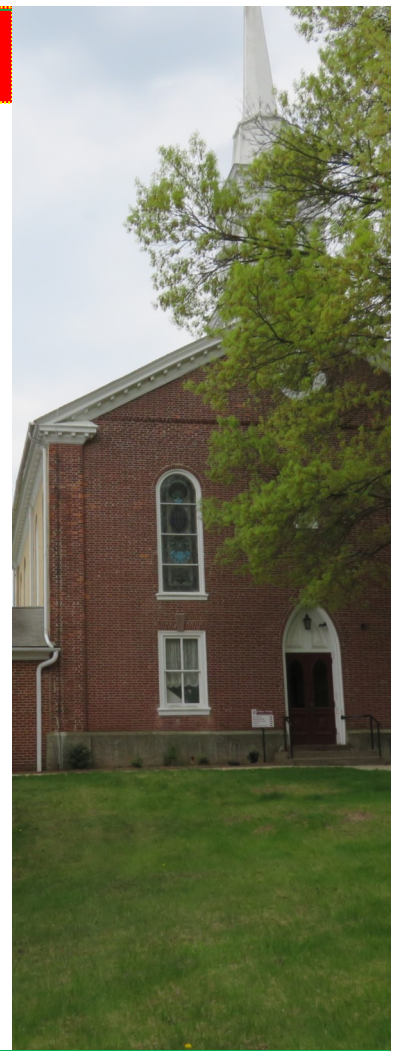
The man has a dream: his betrothed is indeed carrying God's son and he will be honored to marry her. His relatives think he's lost his mind. Still, the man follows through, sensing that he has a choice in the matter, and his is to choose this strange angel's words to guide him. A trip for a census, the proper accounting ... days on the hot road, little food and less water, an imminent birth, no room at the inn....

Where is there light amidst this darkness?

There! The hope of *the world*. Our hope. The hope of young Mary and Joseph who, though outside their realm of experience, chose to trust in visions of angels, of words spoken in the haze of dream, in their new-found sense of purpose in the light of day. There, in a smelly, dirty stable that today we wouldn't let our kids leave without three full blasts of hand sanitizer, lay God's son. Jesus, Emmanuel, "God with us."  
 And so it begins.

Despite our rush and lists, in the midst of our doubt, fear, and our modern revulsion at the coarseness of life, lay light that shines in our darkness.

The baby Jesus, perfectly helpless, utterly vulnerable to dirt, disease, and malnutrition, trusts fully in two humans to bring him into life.



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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- December/January Birthdays
- Fastnacht Social
- Multi-Service Donations
- Christmas Eve Services

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These two humans, who quickly become a young refugee couple protecting their newborn infant in response to another dream: to escape the government leader's pogrom to murder all newborn males. But now, in the darkness Mary and Joseph hold their light, this life, and flee to protect him. How foolish, the innkeeper remarks, they'll be killed before the next sunrise. But they survive.

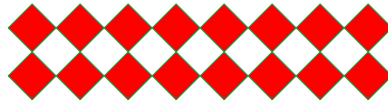
And the light becomes manifest as wise men follow a star – more dreamers, “idiots” the innkeeper mutters after them. The outsiders find the refugee babe, the light they were searching for. Paying homage in sheer wonder, the wise men present the baby with gifts that speak to a rich life. A rich life that all are invited to share, through this baby's life, death, and defeat of all that destroys on God's holy mountain.

And so it begins.

With dreams, of strange beings pronouncing God's favor on us, and in our choices. God with us, Emmanuel, comes unexpected and inconveniently to upend our plans. In our darkness -- whether of despair, of unknowing, or of wounding ideas -- the Advent of Christ shines vast, clarifying light.

And so it begins. Are you ready?

Wishing you Advent peace and Christmas joy,  
Rev. Frances



### **Operation Paperback at Boyertown Area Multi-Service**

**On November 5 three churches, Falkner Swamp UCC, Church of the Good Shepherd in Boyertown, and Calvary UCC in Barto, gathered at Boyertown Area Multi-Service to help the Boyertown Area High School Key Club organize and package books for Operation Paperback, a mission to send books overseas to military service people and their families. About 25 of us gathered from the 3 churches and the Key Club, headed by Erin Ahart, our choir director. With help from BAMS volunteer coordinator, MaryAnn Gruber, we all packed 70 boxes in less than 2 hours! It was fun to sort the books according to genre. A repeated phrase: "Oh, I want to read this one!" Best of all was coming together as a wider people of faith into the community, knowing our efforts mean a lot to the receivers. Thanks to all who came out and participated. Look elsewhere in the VOICE for upcoming ministry opportunities to love God, and love our neighbor.**

DECEMBER  
BIRTHDAYS



- 2 Joanne Lewis
- 2 Raven Smith
- 3 Ellen Whitfield
- 4 Susan Mercer
- 11 Kim (Fronheiser) Kline
- 13 Amayah Baez
- 14 Patricia Rapposelli
- 17 Penny Zerr
- 21 Michael Creed
- 23 Corrie Shaak
- 27 Margaret Kline
- 30 Sharon Sgriccia
- 31 Sue Dickey
- 31 Rachael (Schwenk) Connolly

JANUARY  
BIRTHDAYS



- 2 Bonnie Beckley
- 2 Jordan Moser
- 2 Samantha Moser
- 4 Derek Helsel
- 5 Jessica Erb
- 6 Alexandra Creed
- 18 Sue Smith
- 19 Erica Creed
- 21 Carl Keebler
- 21 Glenn Specht
- 30 Kim Albizer
- 30 Cailin Brennan
- 30 Barbara Fabian
- 30 Doris Moser

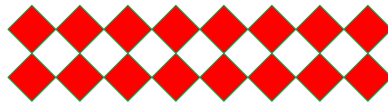


The **Reaching New People Team** is comprised of Becky Comer, Brenda Becker, Stacey Brennan, Sharon Schnaars , Bob Schnaars, Rev. Mary Etta Mest and Rev. Frances Chester. The best part of this team is you are also a member of this team. That's right, the **Reaching New People Team** needs you and everyone in the congregation! Help us reach people in our community who are in need and find events that we, as Falkner Swamp UCC, should consider being a part of. So please if you hear, read, or come into contact with either of these happenings, please bring it to our attention. Also pray for the success of this team. Our first event will be **Saturday, December 16th at 11 am at Freed's Supermarket** for Christmas caroling and spreading Christmas good tidings. We need all of you to help with this event.

Blessings,  
Brenda Semach  
Chair  
Reaching New People Team



*~Rev. Frances, Rev. Mary Etta, & Sharon*



Fastnacht Social will be held on Friday, February 9, 2018. We are looking for performers (talent optional), audience, master of ceremonies, singers and people willing to participate in skits.

**Please save the date and look for more info to follow.**



I have decided to oversee the making of the **Peanut Butter Eggs in 2018!** We are going to make the eggs over two weeks instead of three and we are going to be working four days each week (Monday—Thursday).

The dates are:

March 12 –15

March 19-22

Many hands make lighter work. I hope that we get plenty of help. It is a good time to get together and share fellowship. It also makes money for the church. I am hoping to sell them at Freed's on Saturday, March 17, 2018.

Keep your eyes open for more information.

Thank you very much,

## **FROM THE KITCHEN COMMITTEE**



PND Meals started up again on September 10th. The kitchen crew hopes that you have stayed after worship to enjoy the delicious food and wonderful fellowship.

Beginning in January 2018, the price of the meal for adults will increase to \$8.00. The price has been the same since we started this fundraiser and we feel it is necessary to increase the price by \$1.00 to cover the costs. The money raised from these fundraisers go toward kitchen and fellowship hall improvements.

We are always open to any ideas or suggestions to help make these events better for everyone. Hope you will plan to join us in the upcoming months.

Thank you from the Kitchen Crew.



# DECEMBER 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Communion Blessing of Confirmands	4 7 PM Music & Worship Coordinator's Meeting following	5 Women's Ministries Outing 7 PM PRC	6	7 7 PM Choir	8	9
10 Hanging of the Greens	11	12 6:30 PM Property	13	14 7 PM Choir	15	16
17 Youth Sunday, Choir Singing	18 7 PM Consistory	19	20	21 7 PM Choir	22	23
24 Christmas Eve <hr/> 31 Apostolic Sunday	25	26 7 PM Christian Ed	27	28 7 PM Choir	29	30

## Sundays at Falkner Swamp:

◇ 9 AM Sunday School ◇ 10 AM Worship ◇ 11:30 Fellowship Time ◇ 7 PM AA Meeting

**Dec. 3**— Communion, Blessing of Confirmands, Boyertown Area Multi-Service offering

**Dec. 10** — Hanging of the Greens, PND Meal

**Dec. 17** — Youth Sunday, Joyful Noise Offering

**Dec. 24** — 10 AM Family Service, 7 PM Candlelight Service, Communion, 50/50 offering

**Dec. 31**— Apostolic Sunday, Bob Schnaars leading worship, Future of Falkner Swamp offering

Rev. Frances Hours: (generally) Wednesdays 9:30AM-2PM	Secretary Hours: (generally) Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 9AM-2PM
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# JANUARY 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 7 PM PRC	3	4 7 PM Choir	5	6
7 Communion	8 7 PM Music & Worship	9 6:30 PM Property	10	11 7 PM Choir	12	13
14 PND Meal	15 7 PM Consistory	16	17	18 7 PM Choir	19	20 Christian Ed Crockpot Cook-off
21 Youth Sunday	22	23 7 PM Christian Ed	24	25 7 PM Choir	26	27
28 Service of the Word	29	30	31			

## Sundays at Falkner Swamp:

◇ 9 AM Sunday School ◇ 10 AM Worship ◇ 11:30 Fellowship Time ◇ 7 PM AA Meeting

**Jan. 7**— Communion, Boyertown Area Multi-Service offering

**Jan. 14** — Apostolic Sunday, PND Meal

**Jan. 21** — Youth Sunday, Joyful Noise Offering

**Jan. 28** — Service of the Word

Rev. Frances Hours: (generally) Wednesdays 9:30AM-2PM	Secretary Hours: (generally) Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 9AM-2PM
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Greetings from your Consistory!

We had our monthly meeting November 20th at 7:00 PM. After attendance was taken, we offered an opening prayer to God to give us the courage to do the work He asks us to do in our community. Rev. Frances gave us an inspiring devotional concerning the God of the present, past, and future.

We then had an interesting presentation from Arlene Umstead concerning the Alpha, Bravo Canine Organization. This is an organization that provides dogs as companions/helpers to those service men and women who return from combat with physical or mental/emotional injuries. She suggested that perhaps we would like to see one of their presentations at our church. In the coming months Consistory will be discussing this.

Vicki Fronheiser passed out the minutes from October's meeting, which we all read and approved. Then Vivian Wentzel passed out the treasurer's report. We had a net gain for the month of \$2,366.01. Words cannot express how grateful we are for the continued financial support of the entire congregation!

We moved onto the Pastor's comments and communiques. Rev. Frances has been very busy this month; as you can see elsewhere in this issue of the Voice. We are so blessed to have her as our spiritual leader!

The committees then reported in. Property put to Consistory to accept the bid of \$4,392.00 from Carl Redcay to put the new cover on the Sunday school furnace room steps. The money to pay for this will come from the Future of Falkner Swamp account. A new light pole has been purchased to replace the one that blew down during the storm earlier this fall. An adapter must be made to marry the new pole to the old foundation. We hope to have this done well before Christmas. Visitation noted that Rev. Mary Etta Mest made 11 visits. She truly is one of the many angels of Falkner Swamp!

The balance of the meeting was spent on our Reaching New People Team. In the short view, I want to encourage ALL members of the Congregation to come out to Freed's Market from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM on December 16th for a Carol Sing! At this event we will be singing Christmas Carols, handing out hot chocolate, and a spokesman for the congregation will be inviting members of the community to visit our church for Christmas Eve services, either at 10:00 AM or 7:00 PM. This is a great opportunity to reach out to the local community and tell them about our church! Taking a long view, getting new members is very difficult, but we are commanded to keep trying to "make disciples", and there is no better way to do this than to reach out to our community!

I would like ALL the members of the Congregation to consider joining a church committee this year. We have several vacancies in many committees that up to now have been filled by people who have been on these committees for quite some time and are now stepping down. Specifically, we could use some more people on Endowment, Property and Consistory. It does not take that much time, and it really gives a person insight into how the church works. This church belongs to ALL of us. A couple hours a month is less time than most of us spend watching TV. Please help us do God's work!

Once again, I would like to thank all the members of Consistory who contribute so much to the church life of all of us. I hope some of those folks who are not presently on Consistory will consider joining us in the coming years. It is a joy to be in a leadership position of such a great congregation!

Gratefully,

Bob Schnaars  
President of Consistory



## Congregational Meeting 11/12/17

Meeting called to order at 11:00 AM.

Attendance sheet was passed around to sign to make sure a quorum was met. Bob S. gave thanks to all the current Consistory members, and welcomed Barb Geary to the Consistory. Bob talked about everyone coming out and joining a committee and what each committee does.

Bob S. explained that Consistory works for the congregation. Consistory brought Rev. Frances on as half-time pastor in 2015. Consistory needs to check in with the congregation about this decision. Slips of paper were passed out for members to say "yes" or "no" for keeping Rev. Frances as Designated Pastor. They came back 42-0 in favor of keeping her on.

Discussion of the budget. Motion was made to approve the budget by Mary Ann Erb and second by Doris Moser. Budget was approved.

Property reported their accomplishments during the year, including a door to the boiler room which is still getting bids.

Rev. Frances talked about being a part-time minister. The shared ministry has been put aside for now as there are no churches in the running at this time.

Bob talked about the challenges of our church. At this time the two challenges are: 1) we are all getting older and 2) the congregation is getting smaller. Brenda Semach talked about a group she is in and how we should all work together as a team trying to do something each month in the community.

Robin Zerr is taking over running the peanut butter egg sales and making.

Closed the meeting with the Lord's Prayer at 11:50 AM.

Secretary,  
Vicki Fronheiser



## A Taste of Falkner Swamp UCC Crockpot Cook-Off



We are excited to announce that the youth will be holding a Crockpot Cook-Off as a fundraiser. The cook off will be on Saturday, January 20, 2018 11 AM to 2 PM. Enjoy a tasty lunch! You get to enjoy as many “tastes” as you want, enjoy them with bread and butter, dessert, and beverages. You then get to vote for your top 3 favorite Crockpot Creations.

**All proceeds will go to Youth Fellowship Programs!**

### **Admission :**

\$7 Adults

\$3 Kids 5-12

\$1 Kids 5 and under



At the end of the cook-off we will award the top 3 contestants!

### **Interested in entering the contest?**

Registration Forms to enter your Crockpot Creation will be available in the vestibule on December 5.

There will be a limited number of contestants so make sure if you want to enter YOUR Crockpot Creation grab a registration form ASAP!



Thank You for Your Donations!  
**Our Youth were able to send 18 boxes  
to Children in Need!**



## Falkner Swamp UCC Special Offerings for 2018

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Offering</b>
January 7	Sunday	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the New Year	Boyertown Area Multi-Service
February 14	Wednesday	Ash Wednesday	Church World Service (CWS)
February 18	Sunday	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent	Church World Service (CWS)
March 29	Thursday	Maundy Thursday	Church World Service (CWS)
March 25	Sunday	Palm Sunday	One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) <b>5 for 5</b>
April 29	Sunday	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	The Future of Falkner Swamp
May 20	Sunday	Pentecost	Strengthen the Church <b>5 for 5</b>
July 29	Sunday	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	The Future of Falkner Swamp
September 9	Sunday	Rally Day	Boyertown Area Creative Housing (BACH)
September 30	Sunday	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	The Future of Falkner Swamp
October 7	Sunday	World Wide Communion	Neighbors in Need (NIN) <b>5 for 5</b>
November 4	Sunday	All Saints Day	All Saints Offering for Retired Pastors
November 21	Wednesday	Thanksgiving Eve	Church World Service-Blankets (CWS) & Food for Multi-Service
December 2	Sunday	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent	Boyertown Area Multi-Service
December 24	Saturday	Christmas Eve	50/50 Bethany & Christmas Fund <b>5 of 5</b>
December 30	Sunday	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	The Future of Falkner Swamp
All Year	Sunday	Weekly Envelope Offering	Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) <b>5 of 5</b>

“5 for 5” denotes the five major offerings coordinated by the PSEC. Each year churches are given special recognition at the Spring Conference as a “5 for 5” church if the congregation supported each of these 5 offerings.



## *Community Breakfast*

Community Breakfasts will start up again in 2018! This year we are going to try to schedule them for consecutive months in the spring (February 3, March 3, April 7, May 5). If this goes well, we may then plan them for the fall (possibly October 6, November 3).

We need to again ask for help. We had a very successful year in 2017 thanks to the help and support from so many of you. We always have a great time and it is a wonderful way to spread our love to the community.

We will have a planning meeting on Wednesday, January 17, 2018 @ 6:30 PM.

If you are able to help, please plan to come this evening. Feel free to bring your ideas on how we can make this project even better in 2018!

More to come,

Robin



Falkner Swamp donated 116 pounds of food to Multi-Service in October. Our highest total to date since the pantry started weighing their donations. This record only stood for a couple weeks as we then contributed 8 complete Thanksgiving meal baskets weighing 147 pounds!

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who contributed!

**Falkner Swamp U. C. C.**

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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE



Sunday, December 24th

10 AM—Family Service \*Communion \*50/50 Offering

7 PM—Candlelight Service \*Communion \*50/50 Offering

Falkner Swamp's mission is to be a place of Welcome to All of God's children. To be a place of spiritual retreat for all who seek to know the loving Still Speaking God using the scriptures found in the Holy Bible, the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and utilizing modern interpretations and resources to make the word alive and well in the age we are in.

~From "Constitution & Bylaws," September 29, 2013