

THE VOICE

Yearbook Edition - 2021 at Falkner Swamp UCC

(Reminding you what did happen in 2021)



Reflection on 2021 from Rev. Frances

Dear Falkner Swamp Family,

Welcome to the 2021 Yearbook edition of the newsletter.

We continue in 2021 to adjust to worship and life together in the midst of living in a global pandemic, caused by COVID-19. Although weary, we continue to weather these days with fortitude and trust in the triune God, whom we know through Jesus and whose Spirit breathes words of life.

Our central gathering is Sunday worship. We've held a few events that have brought people together, no small feat in this time. At the start of this year our two longest-lived members, Bob & Margaret Kline, joined with the saints of light, and in November, we celebrated the 90th birthday and appreciation of 65 years of organ playing from our next longest-lived member, Arlene Umstead.

Laura Brown, former volunteer director of Faith Formation, began pursuing her call to ministry. Consistory voted to support her as a Member in Discernment (MID) with the Covenant Association. At the Consistory meeting where Laura presented her candidacy for entering the MID process, I believe I can speak for all that we were deeply moved by her sense of call to explore ordained ministry.

In addition, Laura stepped down as our volunteer coordinator of children's faith formation to accept a paid position at Glenside UCC. Though we miss her presence and her energy, I am grateful she is leaning into the work and mission to which God calls her. You all, as Falkner Swamp, will walk this journey with her in love as she pursues education and experience as a MID. To keep in touch with her church family, Laura continues to organize outdoor walks. Check future newsletters for upcoming dates.

This year we began a Confirmation class. The nature of forming a person in the Christian faith has never happened in just one year from taking a class and going on a few field trips. Yet it is a beginning to deepen the faith parents and grandparents have introduced their children to, so they can make decisions for themselves. In that spirit, our Confirmands are not automatically assumed to be Confirmed into church membership at the conclusion.

It is a choice they each will make. Six of these 8th and 9th graders – see picture elsewhere – gather with me twice a month to explore topics such as understanding how we believe what we believe, looking at Scripture, church history, power dynamics and how they show up in our lives and in Jesus' story. We've taken a field trip to the site of Working Together. Later in February we will serve a meal at Opportunity House in Reading and see a funeral home and crematorium. We will also attempt visits at other houses of worship. Each Confirmand has a Mentor, an adult to walk this part of the faith journey with them. Confirmation Sunday is May 1, so please mark your calendars for this special day.

Take a look elsewhere for news of my upcoming sabbatical and a peak at 2022.

With you on the journey,
Rev. Frances

Ministry “by the numbers” for 2021:

| | |
|---|--|
| Worship Services | 46 |
| With Communion | 13 |
| Pastoral Visits (in person) | 10 |
| Adult Education sessions | 17 |
| Newsletter Articles | 41 |
| Children’s Faith Formation | 1 |
| Confirmation Sessions | 12 |
| Funerals/Memorial Services (in person & Zoom) | 4 |
| Graveside Internments | 5 |
| Baptisms | 0 |
| Weddings | 3 |
| Pastoral Care & Counseling (phone, Zoom, or in person) | 36 |
| Consistory and Committee Meetings | 44 |
| Clergy Group Meetings (ie., Community of Practice, Pottstown Ministerium) | 28 |
| PSEC Conference & Covenant Association meetings | 36 plus General Synod, July 11-18, all online. |
| Boundary & Diversity Training (req’d by Covenant Assoc.) | Racial Justice Symposium, Dr. Drew Hart (Diversity) 3 hr. Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations (Boundary) 3 hr. |
| Education hours (req’d by Covenant Assoc.) | From Start to Finish Sermon Camp (online) 30 hr. Foundations of Gestalt Pastoral Care (GPC)* 40 hrs. Webinar “The Nones” , Dr. Ryan Burge/PA Council of Churches 1 hr. Webinar “We Aren’t Broke” author Rev. Mark Elsdon 1 hr. |
| Other: | |
| Missions (ie Crop Walk) | 5 |
| MontCo County Commissioners webinar w/ clergy on COVID | 4 |
| Various webinars on Advent/Lent worship, COVID and church, spiritual care for others etc. | 11-12 |

Gestalt Pastoral Care is a form of care rooted in Jesus’s ministry of healing. It is a combination of Gestalt growth work, spiritual companioning, and prayer for healing. “Gestalt growth work” refers to a psychological theory that each person’s being is constantly stretching for healing and growth. The worker in Gestalt deals with what is present for the person seeking help, not in their past or future, but what is *right now*. This Foundations course is ideal for pastors. It combines theory and strategies for working with people in the course of ministry. I began the course in September 2019 and it was completed in August 2021.

2021 Report for Consistory

Happy New Year to our Falkner Swamp Faith Community!

As we turn the page on another year at Falkner Swamp, I would like to start by saying Thank You! Thanks to everyone who is reading this newsletter and has remained interested in being a part of Falkner Swamp. Without your love, support, and dedication there would be no Falkner Swamp.

We are meeting in person with some frequency again and have continued to simultaneously share our faith community with those unable to attend in person with the addition of our more permanent live streaming system. We have been able to showcase the hard work and talents of our choir under the direction of our new director/organist. We were even able to celebrate the arrival of the Christ child in person, as we met for Christmas Eve Service.

We were able to install a new roof on the educational wing of the building and began the long running process of updating our heating system. Both of these repairs will allow us to open our doors to the outside community as we move forward.

We shared our building with our neighbors as we hosted a Flu Shot clinic and allowed our Fellowship Hall to be a voting location during elections in November. Events like these let the community know that we are there to serve them not only on Sunday, but every day.

Some things may not be exactly the same as they were before the pandemic. Change is inevitable and often necessary. It is also scary and uncomfortable. Not all things worth doing are easy, or comfortable or familiar, but that does not mean that they should not be done. As we move forward, please try to focus on what we have in common and what brings us together. We are Falkner Swamp.

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You,

Matt Brown

Consistory President

Consistory Members: Ron Becker, Stacey Brennan, Matt Brown, Lee Comer, Barb McDonough, Karen Miller, Doris Moser, Kim Shaak

2021 Choir Notes



2021 proved to be a challenge in many ways, but the choir is grateful that we were still able to make music together. It didn't matter if we had to wear masks, had to spread out in the fellowship hall, sing outside or sing all together in the choir room or Sanctuary, we were thankful for the opportunity to make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

I thank each and every choir member for "hanging in there" and also for accepting the challenge of learning new and sometimes difficult music. Your love of singing and joyful attitudes that you bring to rehearsal each week are truly a blessing. It is amazing to see how music can bring us all together as one group singing in harmony! We look forward to another year of making music together!

Erica Creed, Choir Director and Organist

On October 5th, 2021, the Anniversary Committee held its first meeting in over a year. Sadly, all the plans that the committee had come up with for the anniversary we were not able to make come to fruition last year. There were a couple of decisions that were made during this meeting, and the newsletter is a great way to let all of you know what transpired.



1. The committee unanimously decided to disband the committee, there will be no big celebration. Last year, members of our committee and others did recognize our 300th Anniversary during church service. Unfortunately, due to Covid we were unable to prepare the celebration as we all would have liked to have done for this momentous occasion.
2. The committee raised \$3,465.61 and the disposition of those funds will be placed into a “Beautification Fund” for the purpose of painting and clean up after the new heater has been installed. By doing this, all members will benefit from those funds raised.
3. Prior to Covid, our committee was successfully fundraising by selling Wawa Hoagie Tickets. The Committee made the decision to donate the hoagie tickets to our local New Hanover Police and Fire Department; the remaining tickets will be given to Multi-Service. The Multi-Service has a wider network and more opportunity to give those tickets to people that are in need, and we can reach more people that way.

During the countless committee meetings inside and outside of the church, there have been many hours spent by our valued members, researching, planning, selling and preparing countless items. They have done a lot of work on their own and should be recognized for all their contributions. **Thank you!**

Committee Members:

Laura Brown, Arlene Butts Umstead, Barbara Geary, Susan Mercer, Sue Dickey, Karen Miller, Kim Shaak, Robin Zerr, Wayne Gruver, Deb Gruver. Ex-officio, Rev. Frances Chester

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Shaak

2021 Cemetery Committee Report – Falkner Swamp UCC



The Hollowbush Cemetery (adjacent to the church)

The Falkner Swamp UCC Cemetery (adjacent to the New Hanover Fire Company)

List of the committee members: Bob Schnaars, Lot Manager and President; Bob Erb, Lot Manager; Rob Erb, Lot Manager; Ed Thierolf, Lot Manager; Mary Ann Erb, Trustee, Secretary/Treasurer; Sue Dickey, Trustee; Kevin Brennan, Trustee; and Sharon Schnaars, Trustee. [Total of 8; 4 lot managers and 4 trustees]

The mowing of the upper cemetery (by the fire company) was done by Rob Erb, Jr. and the mowing of Hollowbush cemetery and the ‘yard’ around the church itself were done by Ivy League Landscaping, a professional landscaping company near Fleetwood.

The Cemetery Committee received the resignation of Rob Erb Jr., who has opted not to continue to mow for the church. We are very grateful to him for the many years he has done this difficult job! Thank You, Bobby! If there is anyone in the congregation who would like this job (it is a paid position), please contact Bob Schnaars or Bob Erb for more information.

This year five people were interred in the upper cemetery. We managed to have a clean-up / repair day in the spring. Covid is still making work days difficult. I want to thank the volunteers and committee members who faithfully come out for these work days. We could not maintain the cemetery as it is without these good folks.

Once again I would like to repeat part of a poster published by the 120-year-old Barre Granite Association in Barre, Vermont. “...A cemetery exists because every life is worth loving and remembering—always.”

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Schnaars, President
Falkner Swamp UCC Cemetery Committee

Music and Worship Report for 2021



We were all looking forward to 2021 as the year in which we could return to "normal worship" in our church sanctuary - a normal return to our lives. Alas, COVID has had other ideas and continues to be a dominant and disruptive part of everyone's world. But, we have been able to move forward and keep our church and congregation going despite all the craziness. Thank you Lord!

In January and February 2021 we continued to pre-record our services to be presented "on line" on Facebook. We were not back into our church sanctuary for in-church services. During this time, our Music & Worship committee pretty much met weekly. It was a time of continuous changes with the CDC and COVID regulations, so we met weekly to decide how and when we would be able to get back to worshipping again and opening our church.

February 28, 2021 was Arlene Butts Umstead's last service for playing our pipe organ for the hymns. A plaque of our appreciation was presented to her and is now mounted on our church organ. We are so very grateful to Arlene for her many, many years as our organist and all her continued contributions to Falkner Swamp UCC. We were very fortunate to be able to hire a replacement for Arlene (not an easy task) - Erica Creed. Erica has taken up running our church choir and playing the organ for our church services. Erica is no stranger to our church and we are all grateful that she agreed to return to share her time and musical talents with our congregation and choir!

March we decided to try and open the church by having outside services initially. weather permitting. We were able to move indoors the weekend after Easter 2021. Up until now, we were well aware that some of the decisions we were making were unpopular, but...we were doing our best to keep everyone safe and to obey the guidelines put into place by the CDC.

Fortunately, since April 2021 we have been able to continue indoor Sunday worship. Initially, we felt that it was necessary to require masks being worn whenever singing, but when sitting quietly a mask was not required. However, our "dear friend" - COVID - decided to up its' game, so the Music & Worship committee once again had to change our requirements. We now require - while in church - all attendants must wear masks throughout the church service. That requirement continued for the rest of 2021 and into 2022.

In the Spring of 2021, we were able to acquire a PTZ remote control camera and a new computer to help us live stream all church services so folks could "tune in" from home (or wherever they may be) and be a part of our church family. We give a huge thank you to Kevin Brennan and to David Tyson for helping to make this become a reality - very much appreciated. I (Bob Schnaars) devoted many hours of research and learning to create the system and now run it week after week, along with doing the video preparation for the Sunday service. I also edit and post the "Three Minutes on Thursday" videos. The position of "livestream technician" was created and approved by Consistory, at a rate of \$75 per week.

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Music and Worship Report for 2021

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The Summer and the Fall of 2021 went along on a pretty standard basis, with weekly in-church worship. On October 17 we celebrated our Anniversary Sunday, and on November 14 we had our annual congregation meeting after the church service. The Music and Worship committee increased their budget from \$550 to \$800 to help with increasing costs of music and special worship series for church year seasons, such as Lent and Advent.

December brought us to celebrating Christ's birth using the "The Inn", worship series, which was obtained through the Marcia McFee's Worship Design Series. Fortunately, on December 24 - Christmas Eve at 5:00 pm - we were able to have an actual Christmas Eve candlelight service. The committee decided on having only one service this year, but with the hopes of possibly having our usual two Christmas services in 2022. We held one service this year because we were unable to find enough greeters, acolytes and lay readers to cover two services. December 26, 2021, we had a combined Sunday service with Good Shepherd UCC in Boyertown. We met at their church at 35 W Philadelphia Avenue, Boyertown, PA. No service was held on Falkner Swamp UCC that morning.

Once again we are looking forward to a new year...prayerfully asking God to continue to grant us patience and wisdom to help our church grow and be able to reach out to our community. I would like to give a special thank you to my fellow committee members for their hard work, their dedication and friendship through two very difficult years. They stuck it out ... helped to keep our church going ... and I very much appreciate each and every one. Thank you, Rev Frances Chester, Brenda Becker, Fran Berkowitz, Karen Miller, Jim Kooser, Erica Creed, Arlene Butts Umstead and Sharon Schnaars.

Respectfully,
Bob Schnaars,
Music & Worship Committee Chairman

Addendum from Rev. Frances:

A special "thank you" to Bob for creating the livestream platform for our church. Thank goodness he retired so he had the time to do this! I am deeply grateful for the amount of time, effort, and patience he exhibited while learning and implementing this system. Our church congregation is stronger for it and we now have a new level of outreach.

LIVING MEMORIAL FUND – 2021

Beginning Memorial Savings Balance 1/1/2021 = \$2,087.35

Interest Earned 2021 = .22

Total Deposits 2021 = \$295.00

Balance as of 12/31/2021 = \$2,382.57

Respectfully Submitted: Sharon K Schnaars

From the Church Office: Falkner Swamp membership statistics for 2021 [2020 in brackets]

Total Additions: 0 [0]

Total Losses: 4 (4 deaths) [4]

Total Membership as of 12/31/2021: 163 [167]

Total Baptisms: 0 [2]

Average Weekly Worship Attendance: 38 (39 in person worships in 2021)

[46 (23 in person worships in 2020)]



**END OF
FINANCIAL
YEAR**

The end of year financials from our treasurer, Vivian Wentzel, will be provided separate from this newsletter. A few hard copies will be available at the church.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH: LESSONS ON Take the month of February and focus on Wisdom



QUOTES ABOUT WISDOM TO LIVE BY: (feel free to talk about each one...)

Solomon says in Proverbs 12:20, "Listen to advice and accept instruction and in the end you will be wise."

Proverbs 13:20 says, "He who walks with the wise, grows wise."

James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God, who gives generously to all, without finding fault and it will be given to him."

James 3:17 says, "Wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all **pure**; then **peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.**"

David says in Psalm 119:105, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

THOUGHTS ABOUT WISDOM:

- God is the ultimate source of Wisdom.




- Godly wisdom is when we take all our knowledge and understanding we've gotten from church, the people we care about, and all the things we have learned from school and life, and we do good works with it
- When God made us, He didn't just leave us on our own to do the right thing. He gave us ways to seek wisdom whenever we face choices in life. God has the answer.
- Ways to Seek Wisdom: 1). go to God directly aka Prayer, 2). go to a trusted and valued person who can guide you aka parent, teacher, pastor, older friend; and 3) open your Bible

TABLE TALK (Take turns asking and answering these questions. You can do it at the dinner table or while sitting together in your family-time room.)

- Do you think just being really smart is the same thing as being very wise? Explain...
- Have you ever seen someone do something that was really wise rather than foolish? Talk about it.
- When have you ever acted wisely rather than foolishly? How did it make you feel?
- If your friend was have trouble making a good choice about something, what help could you give that person?
- Look at James 3:17 and the description of what Wisdom looks like. Thinking about a decision or a choice you have made in the past or are facing right now, which ones of the describing words would help you decide: (how would your choice look pure, peace-loving, considerate, etc?)



WISDOM ACTIVITIES:

- Bible stories: Solomon's Dream (1 Kings 3:1-15) The Wise and Foolish Builder (Matthew 7:24-27)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzTJqmK8Exk> (song: The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock)
-  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bz-tfiDtyvs> (Object Lesson on Wisdom using Silly String)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQyWce1rWw> (song: The Wise Song)

A PEACEFUL PRAYER Dear Father,

Thank you for being with me always. Remind me to come to You and just ask for Your Wisdom and Peace, especially when I am in a place where I have to make a hard choice or tough decision. Guide me to people who also can help me. They are Your messengers. Remind me to ask myself if what I do is pure, or considerate, or peace-loving. In Jesus' name,
Amen



It was a difficult year for Faith Formation. This past July 25th we hosted a Faith Formation Get Together outside after Sunday worship. We discussed our thoughts regarding a new Children's Church beginning in the fall and served Rita's Water Ice. We had over 30 in attendance including children, parents and Confirmands.



In September we started our new Children's Church program. On Sundays (except Communion Sundays) we invite the children to come down to the Children's Church Room around 10:45 (after the sermon). We have a Bible lesson, sing songs and send them home with a snack. During Advent we had a special program called "The Inn." We sent out Advent activities in November to our children and recently sent out a Religious Coloring Book. We are always looking for ways to connect with the children of our church.

Our six Confirmands, Olivia Baez, Elijah Brown, Abby Chester, Cameron Krause, Finn McDonough and Casey Shaak (picture below) began their Confirmation in September with a program called "Confirm not Conform" with Rev. Chester. Confirmation is set for Sunday, May 1, 2022.



February Voice / Yearbook 2021 Edition

Women's Ministries



Women's Ministries meets on a Tuesday morning once a month. All women of the church are welcome, as ideas are always appreciated on how to provide service to our church and community.

Service to Church and/or Community

- Made 12 Easter baskets for children of Boyertown Multi-Service
- Sent out 83 "Thinking of you Cards" to members
- Sponsored Ellen Whitfield in the Pottstown Crop Walk
- Made 3 silk flower altar arrangements for when no sponsor for fresh flowers
- Donated \$300 to Boyertown Multi-Service for Thanksgiving baskets
- We sold our last 2 hymnal angels
- We have some hymnal angel kits available to make for \$10

Social Events

Summer—Luncheon at Vincenzo's Restaurant

Fall—Ladies Night with dinner and "Chalk Talk" by Rev. Gerhart

Winter—Christmas breakfast at Sunflower Cafe

Pastor Sabbatical in 2022

From Sept 1 to October 31, I will be on sabbatical. Consistory and I will work with the Conference to find a pastor to fill in while I am away. I plan to further some educational goals to enhance my ministry among you and for others we've yet to meet.

Two areas I plan to study further are Gestalt Pastoral Care (see chart below) and training in DCORT (Disaster Crisis Outreach & Referral teams), so I can be a support in times of disaster. I am influenced in this direction by the following: my experience watching the effects on people of extreme weather events locally and across the country, assisting in September at the Montgomery County Area Resource Center after Hurricane Ida, and witnessing the efforts of teams from local churches to support those affected.

The more I am steeped in the Gospel, the greater the call to me to be equipped, and my blinders removed to see God among those whom Howard Thurman called "the disinherited," those with "their backs against a wall."* I am grateful to be supported by all of you in the ministry we do together, and hope that by following where I sense God calling me, you, too, will be inspired to do the same. In Christ's love, ~Rev. Frances

*Jesus and the Disinherited, first published in 1949, re-released in 1996. 112 pages. See also from Isaiah 1:11-17; ch.58; Micah 6:6-8; Luke 4:16:21; Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 1:15-23.

Falkner Swamp Reformed Church of the United Church of Christ
Endowment Fund Committee Yearly Report
February 2022

Russell Miller - Chariman

| Members | Appointed | 3 year term | Expires |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|---------|
| Lee Heffner | 2020 | 1st | 2022 |
| Karen Miller | 2020 | 1st | 2022 |
| Russell Miller | 2019 | 3rd | 2021 |
| Ken Berkowitz | 2021 | 2nd | 2023 |

*need 2 new members

Rev. Frances Chester - Pastor
Defacto Consistory President - Matthew Brown
Defacto Treasurer of Falkner Swamp - Vivian Wentzel

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| Category A |
| Account #1 - \$60,000.00 CD @ Ambler (Bally) Savings Bank #360556 Matured on February 13, 2020 and was moved to Citadel Bank the new CD balance is \$64,659.37 with an interest rate of 2.130% Signers- Lee Heffner & Ken Berkowitz |
| Account #4 Statement Savings Account #20280 @ Ambler Savings Bank Balance as of 12/1/2021 - \$41,625.77 (.25% interest rate) Savings Account - \$5.00 |
| Total A - \$106,290.14 on 12/1/2021 |

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| Category B |
| Account #1 - \$28,501.47 - Ambler (Bally) Savings Bank CD #360506 Rate - 1.84% - matures September 21, 2022 Signers- Lee Heffner & Donna Hoffman Interest to go to general fund annually & principal to be reinvested. |

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| Category C |
| Account #1 - \$2400.00 - Ambler Savings Bank CD #360505 Rate - 1.84% - matures September 21, 2022 Signers - Lee Heffner & Donna Hoffman |

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| Category A | Weibel - \$106,290.14 Accounts #1 & #4 - Total A |
|------------|--|

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|------------|--|
| Category B | Mildred Heinly \$10,000.00 Arthur Landis \$2,500.00 Robert Burns \$3,656.47 Herbert Wagner \$1,000.00 Ralph Geisler \$2,000.00 Sarah Jane Boyer \$845.00 Wallace Leidy \$3,000.00 Washington Leidy \$600.00 Living Memorial Fund \$4,900.00 Total B \$28,501.47 |
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| Category C | William Werner \$1,000.00 Herbert Wagner \$1,000.00 Washington Leidy \$400.00 Total C \$2,400.00 |
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Spring 2022 Calendar

March 2—Ash Wednesday (Church World Service special offering)

March 6—1st Sunday in Lent (Church World Service special offering)

April 10—Palm Sunday (One Great Hour of Sharing special offering)

April 14—Maundy Thursday (One Great Hour of Sharing special offering)

April 17 —Easter Sunday

May 1—Confirmation Sunday

May 29—5th Sunday (Future of Falkner Swamp special offering)

June 5—Pentecost (Strengthen the Church special offering)

OUR CHURCH'S MISSION STATEMENT

as printed in the Constitution & By-laws

The Mission of this congregation 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.