

# NEWSLETTER

FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF FALKNER SWAMP UCC

OUR CHURCH'S MISSION STATEMENT (adopted 11/13/2022)

*as printed in the Constitution & By-laws*

We, the Congregation of Falkner Swamp United Church of Christ offer this mission to all members, friends, and neighbors near and far:

1. To be a place of welcome and a peaceful spiritual retreat for all of God's children.
2. To strengthen and share our relationship with God through the Holy Word, prayer, music, worship, and service to others.
3. To spread God's love by modeling our daily lives as examples set before us by Jesus Christ.

***See inside for:***

*~Lots of thanks for all the recent support of fundraisers  
~ 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events/schedule  
~Phillies Phood Sunday*

## **REV. FRANCES' EDUCATION AND WRITING WEEKS IN MAY**

If you look at our May Calendar you'll see the first two full weeks I am taking an education week followed by a writing week.

Allow me to explain.

To commemorate our 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Sue Dickey is putting together a booklet of our past 50 years. We are fortunate to have the brief, but comprehensive book written by Rev. Gary Hauze, *Ist dies das gelobte Land?* (Is This the Promised Land?), which details the church's beginnings to 1975 when he wrote it. Her booklet will pick up where he left off, to bring us to 2025.

I am contributing a chapter on my last 10 years as your pastor, Since I am not an historian, I will write it from the viewpoint of my pastorate, which began in January 2015 when I arrived as the half-time interim pastor.

To concentrate on this work, I asked for, and was granted, an extra week to complete this chapter. Each year I am given an Education week, which includes the following Sunday. This is standard practice in the UCC. My goal is to take this Education week, plus the following, to complete 90% of the chapter.

On May 11, the Sunday following the Education week, Rev. Dr. Tyson Frey will provide worship. I will lead worship on May 18, and during the sermon, we will hear a remarkable story from Patty Fritz. You don't want to miss it!

Dear Falkner Swamp Siblings in Christ,

Journalist Jim VandeHei, co-founder of Axios, a news outlet that pledges “smarter, more efficient coverage of the topics shaping the fast-changing world,” shared the following observation: “there are three tectonic plates shifting simultaneously: a massive shift in American politics, the advancement of AI (artificial intelligence), and (the fundamental change in) how people are getting their news and information, and therefore creating their reality.”\*

I’ll borrow the image of three tectonic plates shifting to name Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter Sunday, events that ushered in great change for the disciples. In the light of the empty tomb, our faith tradition relies upon the meaning-making of those early Jesus followers while reality smashed up against their expectations, to discern what God was doing among them.

To pick up God’s resurrection path toward new life, they had to make room. To make room, they had to let go. Instead of holding tight while the earth was shaking, they had to free their hands so God could catch them. The following story, courtesy of a former pastor of mine now retired, illustrates.

The preeminent 20<sup>th</sup> c. priest and writer Henri Nouwen got to know the Rodleigh family, a high wire trapeze act from South Africa. One of them explained the role of the flyer and the catcher in the high wire act.

“As a flyer, I must have complete confidence in my catcher. The public might think that I am the great star of the trapeze, but the real star is Joe, my catcher. He has to be there for me with split second precision and grab me out of the air as I come to him in the long jump.”

“How does it work?” asked Nouwen.

“The secret,” Rodleigh said, “is that the flyer does nothing and the catcher does everything. When I fly to Joe, I have simply to stretch out my arms and hands and wait for him to catch me and pull me safely over the apron behind the catch bar. The worst thing the flier can do is to try to catch the catcher. I am not supposed to catch Joe. It’s Joe’s task to catch me. If I grabbed Joe’s wrists, I might break them, or he might break mine, and that would be the end of both of us. A flyer must fly, and a catcher must catch, and the flyer must trust, with outstretched arms, that his catcher will be there for him.”

We are living in an era of high velocity change. Things are speeding up rather than slowing down. When tectonic plates hurl us into the air, when we become unmoored from what we thought was solid and foundational, the spiritual work before us is to let go and leave room for the hand of God.

I have no doubt that God will catch each of you, and me, and set us on a path to new life. My prayer, then, for me as for you, is to let go.

With you on the journey,  
Rev. Frances

\*in the podcast *Honestly*, host Bari Weiss, 4/8/25

## CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

### Committee Reports/Consistory Minutes

Committee reports that are received by the Church Office, and Consistory Meeting minutes that are approved by Consistory, are refreshed on the board outside the church office after each monthly Consistory meeting, typically the third Monday evening of each month, excepting one summer month.

Financial Update through February 2025 (most recent report received)

Total funds available for general use at the end of January:	<b>\$85,375.05</b>
Total Income received in the month of February:	<b>+ \$12,339.35</b>
Total Expenses paid in the month of February:	<b><u>(\$13,632.95)</u></b>
Total funds available for general use at the end of February:	<b>\$84,081.45</b>



We gratefully receive your financial offerings for the mission and ministry of Falkner Swamp UCC through our weekly worship and via checks sent in the mail. We can also receive your financial gifts through this QR code to the left. Your donation will be processed through Vanco and is safe and secure. For all the ways you give, our church thanks you!



				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
				**Rev. Frances' office hours		<b>Community Breakfast 8 – 11 AM</b>
<b>4</b> <b>10 AM Worship w/ Communion</b> Kelly Johannsen send-off  Joyful Noise 11:30 AM Confirmation Class 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Rev. Frances Education Week</b>					
	7 PM M & W mtg.	Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM  10 AM Women's Ministries mtg.  1 PM Scripture Study	Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30 PM			
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>10 AM Worship</b> Rev. Tyson Frey leading worship   7 PM/AA Mtg	<b>Rev. Frances Writing Week</b>					
		Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM  1 PM Scripture Study  6 PM Ladies Night	Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30 PM			
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>10 AM Worship</b> Rev. Frances with Patty F.  7 PM/AA Mtg	6:30 PM Consistory	Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM  1 PM Scripture Study	Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30 PM	**Rev. Frances' office hours		
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>10 AM Worship</b> 11:30 AM Confirmation Class 7 PM/AA Mtg		Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM  1 PM Scripture Study	Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30 PM	**Rev. Frances' office hours		PSEC Spring Mtg. 9 AM – 5 PM  Organ Recital 4 PM

Please send any newsletter submissions by 9 AM on the final Tuesday of each month (except December & July when they are double month editions), to the church office, [falknerswamp@comcast.net](mailto:falknerswamp@comcast.net).

\*\* Times vary, please call or text for an appointment:



## Ladies Night 2025

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

5:30 PM ~ doors open

6:00 PM ~ dinner, door prizes to follow

Featuring: *Marian and Friends*

*Ventriloquist*

Menu (catered by Women's Ministries)

\$15/adult, \$5/child ages 6 – 12, free for children ages 5 & under

Cash only to Judy Miller ~ due by May 4th

**Please note: All (men, women, children) are invited to enjoy the entertainment portion of the evening as guests of Women's Ministries. Join us in the sanctuary for fun & laughs @ 7PM on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Any questions, please see a member of Women's Ministries.**



Thank you to our Cleaning Crews! They keep all our church spaces sparkling & fresh. For May we are in need of cleaners. If you are able to help, please contact Becky.

We can always use more team members, please contact the church office if you have some time & can help out: 610-323-4053 or [falknerswamp@comcast.net](mailto:falknerswamp@comcast.net)



The proceeds from the peanut butter egg fundraiser are \$4753!!!  
Thank you to all for helping to make this a remarkable accomplishment.



## Choir Director Needed

Small church seeking choir director/ piano player. We may be small, but we have an enthusiastic choir who love to sing to the Lord! We are looking for someone who can give us 3-4 hours a week (rehearsal and some Sunday morning worship services). If you are looking for some extra income with only having to devote a few hours a week, we might be the job you are looking for!

Please give us a call to discuss at  
**610-323-4053**  
**Falkner Swamp UCC, Gilbertsville, PA**

You can also contact Music & Worship Chair, Bob Schnaars @ 215-266-9606 or [rdschnaars@comcast.net](mailto:rdschnaars@comcast.net).



Women's Ministries filled 10 Easter baskets for Multi-Service. They were given the age and gender of each child so they could customize the baskets. What a wonderful way to spread some Easter joy!

## FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS – A NEW MINISTRY AT FALKNER SWAMP

By Mary Ann Erb



### DO YOU HAVE A NEED?

Have you ever thought, *“I wish I knew someone who could help me with ...? It’s not especially hard, I just can’t do it by myself anymore.”* It’s critical to know that each of us is not alone — to feel the strength of being part of a church family that cares deeply for each of our members and friends. That not only wishes each other well, but says we’d like to **help** you if we can!

Do you need a picture hung? ...help cleaning out the refrigerator? ...help with shopping? ...have things you’ve wanted to take to Goodwill, or Liberty Thrift, or ... just need some help with carrying items out to a vehicle which will then take it away for you? Do YOU personally need transportation for shopping or an appointment?

Please call Mary Ann Erb at 484-941-4569 to place a request. We are hoping to put together a list of “tasks a/o jobs” that need doing; and a list of “those who are able to help” with various tasks or jobs. Please call Mary Ann between 1 and 5 p.m. on weekdays. If you get the answering machine, please leave your name and phone number, a good time to have your call returned and state your need briefly. If you feel more comfortable just leaving your name and phone number, we can discuss your need when I call you back.

### CAN YOU HELP?

There is an old Beatles’ song with the refrain, “I get by with a little help from my friends.” Can you be one of those friends?

Do you have some free time where you can lend a hand? We are “making a list and checking it twice” to help some of our family and friends at Falkner Swamp live their lives a little easier.

Can you hang pictures? ...help clean out a refrigerator or freezer? ...take someone to the grocery store, drug store, shopping, or an appointment? ...move some furniture? ...empty out a closet or switch things from a high shelf to somewhere it will be easier to access? ... change a lightbulb?

Can you spare some time to assist someone who just can’t do “it” by themselves anymore? Would you make yourself available for an hour or two a week? ...or a month? ...occasionally, but not on a steady basis? ...maybe, but only on a certain day, or during certain hours?

We’re not asking for a lifetime commitment, but your assistance could be a lifeline to someone who needs occasional help and doesn’t know where to turn to ask for that help.

We don’t want to post a list and have people calling with their requests, for some, that’s just too “public.” Our idea is to have one contact person (Mary Ann Erb) who (hopefully) can make contact with those who have a need and those who can help.

This is a new venture. The idea was presented to the Consistory and received the approval with “yes, please.” Now, we’d like to try to do our best to be the “friend” that someone needs.

If you would be willing to participate in this new endeavor, please call Mary Ann Erb at 484-941-4569, and leave your name and a contact number, with a good time for your call to be returned if we don’t make person-to-person contact immediately. And thank you for being a good Samaritan.



## 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee

MARK YOUR CALENDARS TO CELEBRATE OUR CHURCH HISTORY!!

Our committee is moving forward with excitement in preparation for our 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sunday on October 12, 2025.

**On May 31<sup>st</sup> at 4:00 pm**, Vince Ryan, Minister of Music at Advent Lutheran Church in Harleysville, PA, presents an organ recital. He will play our organ and introduce us to a real pipe organ, which he brings and assembles. Better yet, he invites audience participation! This participation will be from the young and not so young. We will collect a free will offering to help offset the costs of the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events. There will be a reception in the fellowship hall following the recital.

Please share the organ concert flyer with friends and family by email, hard copy, or by posting on your social media. The flyer is posted to the Falkner Swamp Facebook page so share widely. The flyer is printed on the back of the May 4 worship order and is available in pdf and jpeg formats. Contact Debbie Lord at [druthlord@gmail.com](mailto:druthlord@gmail.com) if you'd like a copy emailed to you for printing. If you know of a local business that is willing to post the flier, please give them a copy.

**On September 20, 2025, from 2-4 pm** we will host a walk down Falkner Swamp's History Lane. We will have speakers share their knowledge of our past history, past pastors and our cemetery.

This will conclude with a reception in the fellowship hall with a chance to interact with the speakers.

**ALSO, prepare yourselves for a memorable and busy Sunday, October 12, 2025.** This day will be the culmination of celebrating our 300 years of communion being served at Falkner Swamp! We will have our regular 10am service with communion and an anthem by our choir. Following the service there will be a catered lunch for our congregation. At 1:30 pm we will host a reception prior to the 3 pm service. There will be members of our statewide UCC Conference attending as well as retired pastors of the UCC. UCC General Minister, The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, will preach at this service. We will come again to the Lord's table to receive communion. Our recording organist, Philip Crush, will play for this service, and our choir will offer a special anthem.

Please share the postcard, below:



**Falkner Swamp United Church of Christ celebrates the  
300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the German Reformed Church which  
began with the First Communion here at Falkner Swamp**

### *Upcoming Events*

**May 31, 2025 at 4:00 pm:** Organ Concert by Vincent Ryan. This unique concert with a variety of musical selections also features the Orgelkids kit, a small, real pipe organ that is assembled and played. A free will offering will be received and a reception with light refreshments will follow.

**September 6, 2025 from 9 am - 1 pm:** Bake Sale at Freed's Market in Gilbertsville.

**September 20, 2025 at 1:00 pm:** Tours of Falkner Swamp's historic cemetery and building, and presentations by local historians Bob Wood, Dr. Kevin Sterner, and David Sterner.

**October 12, 2025 at 1:30 pm:** Reception followed by service celebrating the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, preaching.

[falknerswamp.org](http://falknerswamp.org) • 610-323-4053 • [falknerswamp@comcast.net](mailto:falknerswamp@comcast.net)

2077 Swamp Pike Gilbertsville, PA 19525



**THANK YOU from the FUNdraising Team!**

Our FUNdraising Team was super busy in April, and you have all been busy helping us!

First, you supplied lots of delicious treats for our **Bake Sale** at Freed's on April 12, and we raised \$447! Thank you to all who baked and/or stopped by to make a purchase, and a special thank you to those who braved the chilly temperatures to help at Freed's that day. (Thank you for the heater, Carol!)

Next, we hosted our first-ever **Bazaar** on April 26. We asked for the congregation's help on *many* levels, and you did not disappoint! You supported the Bazaar by FILLING the storage classroom with donations – we were overwhelmed (in a good way!) with the number of items given to us for the sale. You contributed your own donations, but also collected donations from family and friends, which was awesome!

When we asked for volunteers to sign up to help on the day of the Bazaar, the response encouraged us to move forward with the sale. You all helped us advertise by word-of-mouth, handing out flyers, and sharing our flyer/Facebook post. Many thanks to the people who designed our flyer and our Falkner Swamp pamphlet as well!

For the entire week leading up to the sale, we had volunteers coming to the church in the evening (and some during the day as well) to bring all of the items upstairs and sort them into the proper rooms for the sale. Once it was all upstairs, they organized the rooms so that everything was nicely displayed and it was easy for our customers to shop. It was a ton of work, and we could not have done it without all of those people who generously gave their time for this effort.

And how about the Bazaar itself? WOW! Falkner Swamp showed up! We couldn't have asked for a better team of helpers – you all showed our visitors what a great and welcoming congregation we are!! We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all of your time and effort! (we'll share the bazaar proceeds once the committee has the final amount)

For those of you wondering, we are hoping this will become a bi-annual event, so start saving your donations for April 2027!!

With our sincere gratitude,  
The FUNdraising Team

Rob Krause, Chair; Larry Ercolino, Jim Fahy, Patty Fritz, Cassandra Krause, and Karen Miller

## UPCOMING EVENT

Mark your calendar for June 22, 2025! After our morning worship service, we will gather in our parking lot for **“Phillies Phood Sunday”**. At this time, we are planning to provide hot dogs and rolls, but we will be asking folks to bring a side dish or dessert to share. We are also going to ask that you bring a non-perishable food item that we will then donate to Boyertown Multi-Service.

BTW- the Phila Phillies will have “Phans Feeding Families Day” that night, which is why we are calling this Phillies Phood Sunday (they play the NY Mets) and we will also “fight hunger” with our food donations. Please plan to join your church family on June 22nd! Thank you.



### Confirmation Class of 2025 (Archie Young and Lydia Brown)...

As part of their faith journey, the girls were to complete a meaningful capstone project. The girls decided to organize an effort to support the Clean-Up Bucket project headed by the CWS (Church World Service). They set a goal of filling 10 buckets with a prescribed list of cleaning supplies. \$500 would need to be raised to reach their goal. They created posters and displayed them in the vestibule and in the Fellowship Room. They made announcements during worship service. The \$500 was raised and a big thank-you was sent to all who helped! Becky Comer scouted out and shopped for everything needed. It only took the girls 15 minutes to assemble the 10 buckets. They were soon delivered to those who are in need. Jesus asks us to love one another. The girls answered that call with their kindness and compassion for those who face the clean-up aftermath of a weather disaster.