



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:

- ~Samaritan Fund information*
- ~Creation Care Sunday*
- ~Stewardship Note*
- ~Feed My Starving Children volunteer opportunity*



**MAKE A
"JOYFUL
NOISE!"**

Our children and youth will begin collecting their Joyful Noise offering in August. Please note: in the hopes of avoiding any confusion, they will collect this offering on the final Sunday of each month August – May, regardless if it is a 4th or 5th Sunday.

SAVE THE DATES

- ❖ The Budget Team will hold its first meeting regarding the 2027 budget on Sunday, October 11, after worship. We would like at least one person from each committee/team to attend. Please see Karen if you have any questions.
- ❖ Annual Congregational Meeting following worship on Sunday, December 13

Dear Falkner Swamp Friends,

September rolls around and with it come the school buses as the school year commences. Most of us change our schedule - families scrambling to get everyone fed, dressed and out the door on time, and retired individuals holding off on errands till the buses' rear lights are far down the road.

Usually the sights of school supplies on sale and the iconic yellow bus bring us grownups back to our own classroom days. What do you recall about your education? What kind of student were you? Did learning come easily, were you naturally curious? Or did a certain teacher, friend, or subject unlock something in you?

I've come to realize my own learning came when I felt most at ease with others around me, and I sensed the teacher believed in my ability to learn. It came down to *trust*. When I trusted the environment – that included the other students, too, when I could count on them not to taunt or look down on others -- I felt the freedom to onboard and retain new facts and ideas.

Like many seeds of plants we love, my learning took root and flourished when conditions were fertile. Apple trees, peonies, sugar maples, and the milkweed beloved by Monarch butterflies will begin to grow only after a sustained period of cold, moist soil surrounds the seed. They wait. They have to trust the environment and not sprout only to be killed by a last blast of winter.

I wonder if you learn best, too, when you can trust your environment to support your growth. I hope our church is such a place. We are each in our way both teacher and student, offering our wisdom as well as receiving it from others.

This year we will have multiple opportunities for learning and growth.

-Sept 20 – Faith Formation Sunday, focus on Psalm 23. This year in church school our children are memorizing Psalm 23 (last year it was The Lord's Prayer). I will preach on Psalm 23. Susan Mercer will have a special gift for all.

-Sept 27 following worship, “Creating Safer Spaces” with Erin Milbourne from the Montgomery County Victim Services Center. Erin will cover identity theft and elder abuse, as well as assault and abuse of all kinds. As a church, we may be the first place someone expresses they have been harmed. Learn how to recognize signs of help and how to respond with compassion and care.

-Oct 4 – Creation Care Sunday – our worship will center on our covenant with God to be stewards of the earth. Following worship, discover more from our own Green Team. See separate article in this newsletter.

-Advent – Christmas Carols focus. For each Sunday in Advent, one Christmas Carol will be the sermon focus, using the upcoming devotional Carols for the Coming Christ: a Daily Devotional from Advent to Epiphany, by Adam M.L. Tice.

-Israel, Gaza, and Palestine: Let's be honest: this small cradle that birthed our faith confuses and pains us in the modern age. I'm becoming a student so I can help you, too. More to come on how to gather, so if you're interested let me know.

-Silent prayer retreats - in preparation for my sabbatical in May and June 2027, I will host silent retreats. Stay tuned to newsletters and church announcements.

Growth and learning don't just happen, we must put our hearts and minds into the process.

Saint Anthony of Egypt (251–356 AD) is considered the founding figure of Christian monasticism and the most famous of the Desert Fathers. A monk said to Abba Anthony, "I want to learn, but I do not know where to begin, and I feel it is already too late."

Abba Anthony said, "Every book you have not yet opened is still waiting for you exactly as it was written. Begin today, and today will be early enough."

Implied in the Abba's response is that it is *never too late to start, never too late to learn new things*. Join your church family for a year of growth and exploration.

With you on the journey,

Rev. Frances

P.S. For my education week this year, I am participating in an 8-day directed silent retreat, Tues Sept 8 – Tues Sept 15. Rev. Ann Few will provide pulpit supply and respond to any urgent pastoral care needs while I'm away. See September calendar.

The Samaritan Fund

Summer was a busy month of requests for those needing financial assistance to help them through a rough patch. Such requests were funding through the church's Samaritan Fund. Consistory receives requests from church members and those in the community via our website and phone calls from individuals who either find us on their own or who are referred by helping organizations such as BAMS or Creative Health Services.

Questions often arise about the process and so to answer them, Debbie Lord, Consistory Member, offered the following points during a recent church announcement:

- we receive requests various ways (as above)
- recipients can only receive assistance through the Samaritan Fund one time.
- the money goes directly to the bill to be paid and not to the individual
- it is confidential
- funds are approved by Consistory during meetings or via an email vote that is later ratified in person.

As we depleted most of the Fund, Consistory is advocating for any amount you may be able to give to build it back up, for when someone in our church or community may have a string of bad luck and need support.

New pew envelopes indicate Samaritan Fund; feel free to take one home as a reminder or when you are able to give. For checks please write "Samaritan Fund" in the memo. Thank you for your generosity.

We Are Stewards of the Earth – Creation Care Sunday – October 4

On World Communion Sunday, Christians everywhere share this sacred meal in worship. Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox – who through the ages have argued sometimes to the death over what the bread and the cup mean – take Communion as the one body of Christ. It's a remarkable day of communion on many levels.

At Falkner Swamp we are choosing to lift up one more thing we all have in common: planet Earth. No matter where we receive Communion, the soil that grew the grapes and wheat for bread and the air and water that nurtured them, are as dependent upon us earthly caretakers in Heidelberg, Germany, as they are in Boyertown.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. – Genesis 2:15 (New Revised Standard Version)

The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. (Common English Bible)

The Hebrew words for “till” and “farm” and “keep” and “take care of” are the same words used for laboring on behalf of God (*abad*) and guarding sacred space (*shamar*).

When we care for the gift of the earth that God gave us, we participate in sacred duty.

We will explore this theme during worship on October 4, while communing together with Christian siblings across the shared earth.

Afterward, Debbie Lord and others involved in UCC Climate Hope invite you to stop by their table in Fellowship Hall.



Please stop by the Climate Hope Affiliates table display during the fellowship hour on Creation Care Sunday. Meet members of the Collegeville chapter, including our own Becky Comer and Deb Lord, along with Bev Altemose from Trinity Reformed UCC Collegeville, and Montse Nomdedeu, local educator. Learn more about Climate Hope Affiliates, a joint initiative of the United Church of Christ and [Creation Justice Ministries](#), which represents 36 different denominations.

View the winning artwork from the fourth annual Climate Hope Art Contest for Children and Youth, write a postcard to your legislators about climate concerns, ask questions, view our literature, or just stop by to chat. We look forward to seeing you!

Be informed

Keeping you in the loop



Girl Scout Troop #1688 will begin meeting in Fellowship Hall on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 – 7 PM. They do not meet when school is closed. If Fellowship Hall is needed on a Tuesday evening for a church event, they can use a Faith Formation room or cancel. We're excited about this opportunity to extend our space to those in the community. The troop may even participate in some of our collections or events.



CHOIR UPDATE: We are sad to inform our church family that Erica Creed will not be returning to work with our choir. Her family, farm and employment obligations require a lot of her time so she has decided that she cannot continue teaching our choir, at this time. We will totally miss having Erica with us and we do want to thank her for the past few years of working with us!

We have begun trying to find a new choir director to help our choir continue to provide music for worship. If anyone knows of someone who plays piano and can teach music to our choir, please let us know. You can talk to Bob or Sharon Schnaars or any choir member. It would require about 1-1/2 hours a week for choir practice and recording songs on piano. Until we find someone, our choir will carry on as best we can, because we really feel music is important to our Sunday worship services.

Thank you to our church family for your support and understanding.

Your Church Choir

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 July 2026

Total funds available for general use at the end of June:	\$75,360.28
Total Income received in the month of July:	+\$13,553.90
Total Expenses paid in the month of July:	(\$17,445.51)
Total funds available for general use at the end of July:	\$71,458.67

The net financial results from general church activity for the month of July reflected a loss in the general fund of \$3,901.61 (this amount does not include the parsonage rental income).



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!

Prayer Requests

Let us pray for you

-our elders at home: Betsy B., Ed & Jane H., Judy & Russ M., Doris M., Joan R., Joyce R., Evelyn S., Ellie S.

~Bob E.'s brother, Richard, awaiting more information following test results

~Barb C., as she recovers from thyroid surgery

~Louise, Pastor Paul's wife, who is doing well after some health concerns

~Teddy, friend of Robin & Penny, who is recovering in rehab



		1 Rev. Frances & *Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 10 AM Women's Ministries	2 *Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	3 **Rev. Frances' office hours	4	5
6 10 AM Worship w/Communion 7 PM/AA Mtg	7	8 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	9 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	Rev. Frances Education Week: Sept 8-15 For urgent pastoral care, contact Rev. Ann Few, 717-468-4981.		
13 10 AM Worship Rev. Ann Few leading worship 7 PM/AA Mtg	14	15 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	16 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	17 **Rev. Frances' office hours	18	19
20 10 AM Worship Faith Formation Sunday: Psalm 23 Focus 7 PM/AA Mtg	21 Consistory 6:30 PM	22 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	23 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	24 **Rev. Frances' office hours	25	26
27 10 AM Worship Joyful Noise Offering "Creating Safer Spaces" following worship 7 PM/AA Mtg	28	29 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study Conference Rm. 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	30 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 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.

*Sharon may have to serve on Jury Duty in Philadelphia the week of August 31. We'll keep you posted.

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



Thank you to our Cleaning Crews! They keep all our church spaces sparkling & fresh. For September our cleaners are Bob & Sharon Schnaars .

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

The Dog (and Cat) Days of Summer, from Aug 16

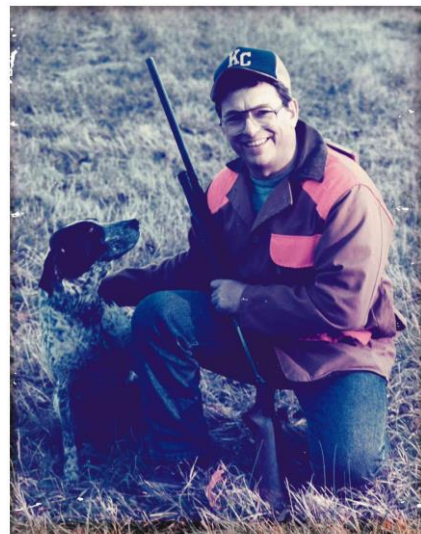
In worship we celebrated our furry pets in honor of the 40-day period in summer called "The Dog Days of Summer."

We listened to stories from congregation members about their beloved pets.

Here are some photos of those we heard about and others who are sharing photos of pets past and present.



Barb Cole's Tango



Bob Erb and his favorite hunting companion, Brandy, both "dogs" are out for a pheasant hunting day. Brandy is the one without the hat 😊



Our Women's Ministries group was busy this summer. They filled and delivered 8 backpacks to Multi-Service and led a tissue drive. Thank you to all who contributed to this ministry.

Their next project is collecting food for Operation 143 starting September 6 through October 4. Below is a list of requested items and you can also find copies in the foyer. As this is the pre-approved shopping list, please try to adhere to it. Operation 143 is a nonprofit organization providing food to students in the local community who would go without over the weekend. They work to help homeless and food insecure students succeed by addressing the issue of childhood hunger. Enough food for dinner on Friday night, breakfast, lunch, and dinner on Saturday and Sunday along with some snacks and water is distributed. All items are ready made with no cooking required.



Create The Change! We need your help.

Pre-Approved Shopping List

Item	Product Example
Tuna To-Go	StarKist Lunch To Go
Compleats Meals	Hormel
Mac & Cheese	Chef Boyardee Mac & Cheese (7.5 oz. or 14.25 oz.)
Spaghettios/Ravioli	Chef Boyardee Beef Ravioli (7.5 oz. or 14.25 oz.)
Chicken & Beef Soups	Campbells To Go Chicken & Beef Noodle Soups
Fruit Cups/Applesauce	Dole Fruit in Juice & Motts Applesauce
Granola Bars/Fruit Bars	Quaker Chewy Bars (chocolate), NutriGrain Bars
Pop-Tarts	Kellogg's Pop-Tarts
Cereal (single serve)	Kellogg's, General Mills
Non-refrigerated Milk	Hershey's, Horizon, Giant (8 oz. boxes with straw)
Variety Snack Packs	Gold Fish, Cheez-Its, Animal Cookies, Crackers
Fruit Snacks	Welch's Kellogg's
Water	Store Brand Bottled Water (12 packs/16 oz. bottles)
Juice Boxes	CapriSun, HiC, Juicy Juice, Apple & Eve
Pudding	Jello Pudding Snacks

SWBP does not endorse any of the items or brands listed. All items should be sized for a single individual and ready to eat with no cooking required. Items should be easy to open without a can opener. Products containing peanuts will not be distributed.

Visit operation143.org to volunteer & contribute

A PROGRAM OF OPERATION 143

238 High Street, Suite 103 & 104, Pottstown, PA 19464

Contact: Lisa Heverly 484.300.4937 | lisah@operationbp.org





Faith Formation: September News...

The children begin our new formatted program, one that provides Bible instruction at two levels- the Senior class vs the Junior class. The Seniors classroom is in what used to be the Nursery room. What stays the same is that all the children will meet right after Children's Message in the service. Together, they will work on this year's Memory Project: The 23rd Psalm and our musical praise portion through song, bells, and performances. At this point, the children will break into their two levels for lessons. The Juniors will continue to hear stories from the Bible, from both Old and New Testament. The Seniors will have more opportunity to discuss those lessons they have heard before and tussle with how it applies to them here and now. We look forward to another invigorating year.



The Pencil Parable



September is that time of year for us to reset. Read this parable of the pencil and remember how to become the best "pencil" you can be in God's Pencil Box.

...In the beginning, the Pencil Maker spoke to the pencil saying, "There are 5 things you need to know before I send you out into the world. Always remember them and you will become the best pencil you can be..."	...Now let's replace the role of the pencil with you: Our Maker says: "Always remember these 5 things and never forget. And you will become the best person you can be..."
FIRST: You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in Someone's hand.	FIRST: You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in God's hand. And allow other human beings to access you for the many gifts you possess.
SECOND: You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time. But this is required if you are to become a better pencil.	SECOND: You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time by going through various problems. But you'll need them in order to become a stronger person.
THIRD: You have the ability to correct any mistakes you might make.	THIRD: You will be able to correct mistakes you might make along the way. Grow through them.
FOURTH: The most important part of you will always be what is inside.	FOURTH: The most important part of you will <u>always</u> be what is on the inside.
FIFTH: No matter what the condition, you must continue to write. You must always leave a clear, legible mark no matter how difficult the situation.	FIFTH: On every surface you walk, you must leave your mark of being a child of God. No matter what the situation, continue to serve God in everything.
...The pencil understood, promising to remember, and went into the box fully understanding its Maker's purpose. 	...Everyone is like a pencil- created by our Holy Maker for a unique and special purpose. Promise to remember: You were made to do Great Things!

A NOTE FROM THE STEWARDSHIP TEAM



STEWARDSHIP

Managing God's Gifts To Us

When completing your pledge card for 2027, please note that the amount of your pledge should only include what you are designating to "Current." We are not asking for a specific commitment to Benevolence or special offerings. For example, if you plan to give \$10 per week, broken down as \$8 for Current and \$2 for Benevolence, your weekly pledge would be \$8 per week.

The reason why the pledge is only for Current is to give the Budget Team a reasonable estimate of the funds that will be available to run the church in 2027. We may need to add new expenses that we haven't had before, while we are also looking for any expenses that can be cut. Having a realistic estimate of our income helps us to be sure we aren't overspending.

We also want everyone to know that the Stewardship Team is not tracking your giving. We understand that life happens and circumstances can change – and that's okay. Your contributions are confidential.

Thank you all for prayerfully considering your Current giving so that Falkner Swamp can continue to shine God's light into the world.

FUNdraising Team Fall Mum Sale



The FUNdraising Team will be selling mums this fall!

We will be taking orders from September 13 until October 4, and hope to have the mums available for pick-up at the church on Saturday, October 17. You will have a choice of colors, and the mums will be \$10 each. We'll have order forms for you to fill out. *Please note that the dates are tentative right now, as we are still working with the greenhouse to coordinate our fundraiser with their mum availability and color selection. More details to come. Please see Patty Fritz if you have any questions.

Grocery Store Cards for Project Libertad – Bring In through Sept 13

Ann Few is collecting grocery gift cards to Redner's, Giant, and Aldi to donate to Project Libertad in Phoenixville. This organization helps children and youth who are immigrants with legal, social, and academic support. Right now, with mass deportations, children and youth remain here while their parents have been deported.

Any amount gift card is appreciated. Just drop it in the wood box in fellowship hall through Sunday, Sept. 13.

Thank you for your generosity.



Turn Hunger into Hope With Your Own Two Hands

Do you have 2-1/2 hours to make a difference in children's lives? Feed My Starving Children is having a MobilePack event at Berean Bible Church in Pottstown from Thursday, September 24, through Saturday, September 26. Feed My Starving Children (FMSC), a Christian nonprofit, estimates that at least **6,200 children die each day** from undernutrition-related causes. **WE CAN HELP.** Pack meals of rice, soy, vitamins, and dried veggies which will be donated to partners overseas to feed children facing food insecurity. Our goal is to pack over 750,000 meals!

Please go to [2609-094MI Pottstown PA Pottstown - Campaign](https://www.feedmystarvingchildren.org/pottstown) to see session times and to register online. To register by phone, call Donna at (610) 413-4384.



24-26

SEPTEMBER 2026

POTTSTOWN MOBILEPACK EVENT

BEREAN BIBLE CHURCH
2675 E HIGH ST, POTTSTOWN, PA 19464

Join us for a Feed My Starving Children MobilePack™ event to provide lifechanging meals in some of the most challenging hunger hotspots across the globe. We welcome volunteers of all abilities, ages 5 and up!

VOLUNTEER. DONATE. LEARN MORE.

fmscpottstown@gmail.com | give.fmssc.org/pottstown
610-326-8794

