

NEWSLETTER YEARBOOK EDITION

2025 AT FALKNER SWAMP UCC

(The life of the church in words and pictures.)



Field Ed Student,
Kelly



New paraments

Work Day



Peanut
Butter Egg
Making



300TH ANNIVERSARY

Our 10 AM worshippers in our new church t-shirts



Rev. Frances leads tour of building and cemetery



Sue Dickey presides over the table filled with historical papers and items



Local historian Bob Wood shares Falkner Swamp history



Bake Sale @ Freed's

Authors David & Kevin Sterner discuss their new book, "Man of Spirit" about their ancestor and our first pastor, John Philip Boehm



Organ Recital



Reflection on 2025 from Rev. Frances

Dear Falkner Swamp family of faith,

History is the ship carrying living memories to the future. – Poet Stephen Spender

If ever there was a year we embodied this saying, it was 2025 as we lifted up our 300th anniversary of the first Communion of our faith ancestors. We celebrated on Oct. 12, 2025, with a worship service that filled our sanctuary, vibrated with nearly 200 voices in song, and shared the body of Christ with all. The sermon was delivered by UCC General Minister and CEO Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. Her closing words: “Know this: that just as God walked with the ancestors who gathered here in this place 300 years ago, God will walk with you.”

God walks with us as we finalize our steeple project, begun in spring of 2022 when the former fiberglass steeple was found listing toward the cemetery due to rotting support beams, and the new finally erected Monday, November 24, 2025.

God walks with us as Working Together, Inc, folded soon after a “soft open,” sold the 120 acres off Sanatoga Road, and returned a portion of the promissory note Endowment leant the organization in 2023.

God walks with us as beloved church members, family members, and friends pass away, move elsewhere, or lose touch with us.

God walks with us as we join each Sunday – unless there is snow piling up! – to greet each other, listen to God’s word in scripture and hear a word for our lives, join our voice in song and prayer, offer financial gifts, and receive gifts of bread and cup and fellowship.

God walks with us in the quiet, joins us in joy, accompanies our anxieties, graces us in our times of gratitude, abides with us in sickness, rejoices with us in return to health, opens our eyes to see our blindness, strengthens our hearts to witness the harms done to others, and cheers us on in mission and service.

God walks with us as we tell others about our faith, invite someone to our church, and welcome a stranger to our Community Breakfast.

God walks with us when we question all we’ve been taught about God, everything we read in the Bible, and the reason for our work and our lives. *Especially then, God draws close.*

Throughout our history and the one we are making now, God walks with us. Thanks be to God who chose to become a human being in Jesus. Thanks be to God’s Spirit who fills us and pursues us. Thanks be to all of you, the church of Jesus Christ, who choose God’s path of love daily, shown in acts of compassion and humble service.

With you on the journey,

Rev. Frances

Consistory Report for 2025

Thank you to all of our Consistory members for their dedication and thoughtful service. A special thank you to Stacey Brennan for her many contributions as she steps down from Consistory after two 3-year terms. I would also like to thank Doris Moser, who retired from Consistory in February 2025; Doris has been on Consistory many times and has always served God and our congregation with great love. Many thanks to Rob Krause as well, who has also resigned from Consistory; we wish the Krause family all the best.

Falkner Swamp UCC celebrated the 300th Anniversary of our first Communion in 2025! The Anniversary Committee put in countless hours of work: dreaming, planning, and executing many wonderful events to help us all celebrate and tie our past to our present and our future. We sincerely appreciate all of your hard work to make our anniversary so special, not only for us, but for our local community and the UCC as a whole.

Every committee/team here at Falkner Swamp plays a crucial role in the life of our church. Consistory thanks each chairperson and committee member for your dedication in making sure that we are carrying forth God's love to each other, to our community, and to the world through our missions and education, and practicing good stewardship with our physical and financial assets.

In an effort to have clearer, standard procedures in some matters, we created Human Resources Guidelines and revised our Safe Church Policy (both approved in March). We also approved an updated Wedding Policy in April.

We only had one request for assistance from our Samaritan Fund, and we were blessed to be able to help that family. In October/November, our Budget Team, including Consistory members and other committee members, worked together to create a realistic *and* optimistic budget for 2026, which was approved by the congregation in December.

Consistory has also been managing leases for the parsonage and two offices on the lower level of the Sunday School wing. In 2026, the parsonage and one office space in the church building are being leased. Additionally, we have been dealing with the steeple project, which is nearing completion.

2026 Consistory members include: Barb Cole, Patty Fritz, Vicki Fronheiser, Lee Heffner, Debbie Lord, Barb McDonough, Karen Miller, Sharon Schnaars, and Diane Weller. Officers are Karen Miller, President, and Vice President will be voted on at February's Consistory meeting.

Yours in service, Karen Miller

Snow Cancellations on Sunday mornings:

- WFMZ 69- usually by 7:30 am
- On Facebook
- New: Now via Flocknote



Cemetery Yearbook Report for the year 2025



The Cemetery Committee participated in a workday for the cemeteries and the church property. Robin Zerr provided a delicious lunch to all the workers from The Cemetery and Property Committee, and some of our wonderful church members who volunteered their time and talents to help accomplish the work.

We'd like to thank Kevin Brennan for his years of service to the committee. Kevin has resigned from the Cemetery committee as of the end of 2025. Our committee is now down to five members: Sue Dickey, Trustee; Mary Ann Erb, Secretary; Bob Erb, Sr., Lot Manager; Rob Erb, Jr., Lot Manager, and Sharon Schnaars, Treasurer. We welcome anyone from our church, members and friends, to join us in the caretaking and decision making of our cemeteries: the Hollowbush Cemetery, adjacent to the church building, and The Falkner Swamp UCC Cemetery located east on Swamp Pike and next to the New Hanover Fire Company. If you'd like to join us, please speak to any of the five of us.

Our hearty thanks to Kevin and Stacey Brennan for marking the grave sites and tombstone placements for this year. We very much appreciate your help.

Once again, we thank Sharon Sgriccia for handling all of the cemetery inquiries and duties in regards to the burials, paperwork and questions that come into the church office by phone, email or in person. Your efficient help, as always, is very much appreciated.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Ann Erb



Friends Helping Friends

Friends Helping Friends is one of the newest programs at Falkner Swamp. It was initiated in March of 2025, to help members and friends of Falkner Swamp through occasional difficulties with the help of volunteers composed of other members and friends of Falkner Swamp

To date, the FHF have only been called on once to help a member with transportation. We'd like to be more helpful, but haven't received other queries.

If YOU need help with something, please call Mary Ann Erb (484-941-4569). Falkner Swamp UCC is a church that wants to help our people to flourish, and is at the ready to do what we can.

ANNUAL MUSIC & WORSHIP COMMITTEE/TEAM REPORT

YEAR: 2025

Report Submitted: January 14, 2026



Committee/Team Members: Robert Schnaars (Chairperson), Sharon Schnaars, Rev Frances Chester, Brenda Becker, Fran Berkowitz, Peg Heffner and Jim Kooser.

Former Committee Members: Cassandra Krause and Cameron Krause

January/February: We met on February 3, 2025. We reviewed 2024 Christmas Eve service and spent most of the time planning upcoming Lent/Easter seasons. We agreed to have an Ash Weds service (March 5) & planned for Maundy Thurs service w/prayer vigil Thursday noon to Good Friday noon (April 17-18). Easter services to be 8:00AM outside service; 10:00AM in sanctuary.

March: Meeting held on March 3, 2025.

- Rev Bill Worley provided sermon on March 2, 2025. Also, noted that on Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025 Kelly Johannsen (our Field Education Student who joined us from Sept 8, 2024 until May 4, 2025) will provide sermon.
- Discussion re-opened on trying to hire a choir director.
- Two new digital pianos were purchased – one for choir room practice and one for sanctuary. Old pianos will be removed.
- March 5, 2025 Ash Weds service held in Fellowship Room / Communion was served.
- Erica Creed agreed to teach/practice with choir from March until June while we continue to look for a permanent choir director. She requested \$75.00 a week during this time and, because we now have digital pianos, she will record music for choir to sing on Sunday mornings without a director.

April: Meeting held April 7, 2025.

- April 27, 2025 was an apostolic Sunday. Rev Angelee Benner-Smith will provide sermon.
- Cameron Krause notified us that he will no longer run our on-line streaming of church services. Bob Schnaars took over until a replacement could be found.
- Anniversary committee asked if some Music & Worship funds could be used for upcoming 300th Anniversary in October. Since we were not paying a choir director, we agreed to provide some of our budgeted funds.

May: Meeting held March 20, 2025.

- Brenda Semach Thierolf agreed to run the on-line streaming of church services.
- We planned for a church tailgating/picnic for June 22, 2025 called “Phillies Phood Sunday” providing food, fun and fellowship. Named Phillies Phood Sunday, because the Philadelphia Phillies were having their “Phans Feeding Families Day” that evening. Church provided hot dogs and drinks. Congregation to provide side dishes.
- Peg Straub agreed to make new paraments for our Advent season using blue background material.
- Choir summer time off to begin June 15, 2025. Practice will resume again in August.
- Philip Crush (our organist) agreed to play for our afternoon Anniversary Sunday at 3:00pm Oct 12.

June: Meeting held June 2, 2025.

- Vacation time for Rev Frances June 29, 2025. Rev Paul Jones will provide sermon.
- Rev Ann Few provided sermon on June 15, 2025. She will also be “on call” during Rev Frances vacation time (June 9 thru June 11 and June 26 to June 29).
- June 22, 2025 Tailgating/picnic as mentioned above in May planning.

(continued on next page)

Music and Worship Report for 2025 (continued from previous page)

– Discussion regarding church service streaming - in that, announcements from congregation cannot be heard for those watching on-line. A microphone will be provided to those making announcements which will then be broadcast during streaming.

July: Meeting held July 7, 2025.

– Kevin Brennan agreed to assist Brenda Semach Thierolf with the on-line streaming of church services. He will assist when needed and fill in when Brenda is unavailable.
– We agreed we would reach out to Erica Creed to see if she would agree to return to teach/practice with our choir and record anthem music on digital piano for Sunday services. Since we received ZERO responses to our advertising and search for a choir director, we felt Erica may agree to return.

August: Meeting held August 25, 2025.

– Rev Frances vacation dates: August 3 to August 10, Rev Paul Jones will lead service and provide sermons. August 17, Susan Mercer will lead and provide sermon.
– Choir practice begins August 20, 2025
– Erica Creed agreed to return to teach/practice with choir. She will only come to practice on Weds nights and she will record Sunday morning service music that the choir will sing to “on their own”. We will pay Erica a weekly salary with net pay being \$75.00.
– Due to Rev Frances’ vacation times, our August meeting was held on August 25, 2025.

September: Meeting held on Sept 8, 2025.

– Faith Formation Sunday held Sept 14. Stewardship kickoff also be held on this Sunday. Three testimonials were given by Judy Miller, Stacey Brennan, and Henry Young on “Why Do I Give to Falkner Swamp?”
– Youth Faith Formation’s children’s Sunday will now be done on the fourth Sunday of every month instead of the first Sunday of the month. To continue to include Joyful Noise offering.
– Sunday Sept 28 – Rev Kevin McLemore (the Association Conference minister for Search & Call) provided sermon.
– On Anniversary Sunday Oct 12 afternoon 3:00pm service – we will pass the communion elements in the pews rather than have congregation walk forward to receive. We are not writing a lot about the Anniversary Sunday since the anniversary committee will be submitting their own year-end report.
– Started planning for Advent and Christmas season. Decorating church for Christmas Nov 30; Christmas Eve service to be held at 7:00pm; Sunday Dec 28 to be a casual “wear your pajamas” and hymn sing service; etc.

October: Meeting held October 13, 2025.

– Bob Schnaars purchased a new microphone headset for the church, so we now have two headsets that can be used.
– Brenda Semach Thierolf also ordered a second camera for the sanctuary for our Sunday on-line services. Brenda and Kevin Brennan installed new camera and got it up and running.
– October 19 is an apostolic Sunday. Rev Marian Shearer will provide sermon.
– 300th Anniversary Sunday was held Oct 12. A wonderful day and a total success! Thank you Anniversary committee for your time and hard work. Philip Crush provide organ music for 3:00pm service and he also lead our choir while playing piano (Anthem: Come to the Table, Come to the Lord). Philip also came to practice with the choir the week before this service. Choir also sang at 10:00AM service (We Are Your People and a benediction Blessing of Light).
– Decided to keep our M&W budget for 2026 church budget at \$500.00. (continued on next page)

November: Meeting held November 3, 2025.

- Christmas caroling led by The Dogs to be Sunday, Dec 14, 2025 in Fellowship room (1:30 – 2:30).
- November 9 we had two baptisms during service. Elowyn Mary Curran (Parents Patrick & Heather Curran) and Olivia Veronica Pangrazi (parents Marco & Caitlin Pangrazi).
- November 16 is an apostolic Sunday. Rev Paul Jones provided sermon.
- November 30 congregation invited to help decorate church for Christmas season.
- November 30 at the 10:00AM service. Peg Straub made new blue paraments for our Advent Season. She donated all her time, materials, creativity and talent to making the paraments. The paraments were dedicated and unveiled at this service. Thank you Peg! Beautiful.
- Discussed Christmas Eve music for service. Bob Erb will sing (with Bob Schnaars accompanying on guitar) Mary Did You Know and O Holy Night. A quartet will sing Silent Night in German (Peg Heffner, Ingrid Weil, Kelly Johannsen, and Rev Ann Few), while individual congregation candles are being lit.
- We agreed that communion elements would again be passed among the pews as was done for the Anniversary Sunday service.
- Our church provided a neutral pulpit on November 2. Emma Walker provided sermon/message and helped with service.
- A new microphone was purchased for the lectern in the sanctuary. We needed to improve the sound in the sanctuary and for the on-line listeners/services.

December: No meeting held in December. Next meeting set for January 4, 2025.

December 7, 2025 – Sunday – Congregational meeting after church service.

December 24, 2025 (Wednesday) Christmas Eve service held at 7:00pm. Candlelight service with communion.

December 28, 2025 – Sunday - was a hymn-sing Sunday. Also a “wear your pajamas” relaxed Sunday. Individuals talked about some of their family traditions and hymns were sung.

Respectfully Yours & Submitted by:

Robert D Schnaars, Chairperson for Music & Worship Committee/Team

Worship and Prayer in Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

Sign up for Lent Devotional (daily) written by local UCC clergy, Rev. Frances among them
-you choose hard copy or email

Wed Feb 18 – Ash Wednesday service, 6:30-7:15, Fellowship Hall

Sundays Feb 22-March 22 and March 29, Palm Sunday

Thursday April 2, 7 pm Maundy Thursday service, 7 pm, Sanctuary

Maundy Thursday-Good Friday Prayer Vigil, 9 pm-Midnight; 5AM-afternoon. Sign up for a time slot to pray in sanctuary.

Easter Sunday, April 5, 8 am (outdoors, weather permitting) and 10 am, sanctuary

Tell Me Something Good! Worship in Lent



From Sanctified Art comes the worship series “Tell Me Something Good,” that tells the stories of what was central to Jesus’ life and ministry: radical welcome, love for neighbor, care for the vulnerable, nourishment for the hungry, nonviolence in the face of injustice. At the heart of Jesus’ teachings, we find liberation, love, mercy, and grace—all of which are meant to be very good news for us all.

From the series website:

“Jesus’ ministry can be described as ‘radical’ which comes from the Latin word ‘radicalis,’ meaning ‘root’ or ‘ground.’ Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots. Emulating Jesus and embodying his teachings should ground us in who God created us to be. Can we be ‘good news’ people in a world too often burdened by bad news?

This Lent, let us remember that the good news really is good news. It is joyful—like fine wine saved for celebration. It grows like a mustard seed and smells like perfume poured from an alabaster jar. It tastes like bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. The good news is alive in the world.

We hope this series will provide fertile ground for conversation and worship, rooting our hearts and lives in the expansive goodness of God. This Lent, let the teachings of Jesus lead us forward. May the good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.”



Altar
Flowers
Ministry Opportunity

Flower Committee Report for 2025

Altar Flowers are available to sponsor on all Sundays with the exception of Easter Sunday and the Sunday before Christmas when special flowers and plants are available to anyone in honor or memory of a loved one. If you would like to sponsor flowers to be placed on the Altar, please call or text Becky Comer no later than noon on the Tuesday before the Sunday you wish to have flowers. If you want particular flowers or colors, be sure to notify Becky. You can also do your own write-up for the Sunday Bulletin (send this request to Sharon in the office by 10:00 the Wednesday before you want flowers). We use Wendy’s Flowers and the cost is \$30. Anytime you want to supply your own flowers in memory or honor of a loved one, please let Becky know.

Easter and Christmas Flowers are available as stated above. Order Sheets will be available several weeks before these holidays. Prices vary.

Becky Comer – 610.413.3729



Faith Formation Committee 2025 Members: Rev. Frances Chester, Becky Comer, Susan Mercer

The Children: In August, the children had their back packs blessed just before they started back to a new school year. Starting in September, the children's lessons were those that mirrored the topics presented by the pastor. Many times, the topics need more discussion and explanation time. Other lessons focus on New Testament Jesus stories of miracles and parables. Last year, the children all worked on memorizing the 12 disciples. This year our challenge is to recite The Lord's Prayer. And of course, the children enjoy adding new songs to their Bell Choir repertoire: Zachaeus, Ode to Joy, Away in a Manger.

Many thanks to the parents who act as aides each Sunday, escorting the kids downstairs after the Children's Message. They engage in free-playtime and craft activities in fellowship with others. Then the instructors come down and we enter into Bible lesson time and singing.

During Advent Season, the children's lessons and activities focused on the Nativity Story through a play called Away in a Manger. They practiced their parts as animals, shepherds, and angels. And of course, The Star of Bethlehem. The children also learned and performed the song, Away in a Manger, in voice, as well as in bells.

We collected a wonderful amount of gift cards in December 2025 in support of the children at Bethany Children's Home-\$550. Blessings to all of you!

During the Lenten Season, our lessons are guided by the theme: The Good News Is...". The Children hear the Easter story with supporting craft activities and songs. They will again sing Easter Bells which includes the Children's Bells. They will also recite an Easter Poem. The kids really enjoyed learning how to perform with a set of a one-octave mini-bells. Many thanks to Ann Few who was able to record or play live with the children from time to time. We will continue to utilize the bells in future songs.

We continue to host our annual Easter Egg Hunt. 2025's hunt was conducted inside. And we were able to conduct 2 separate searches- one for the toddlers, one for the older children. In addition to the candy inside each egg, gift bags were handed out, and cookies and juice were enjoyed.

Joyful Noise continues to be a great success. The children enjoy walking out into the congregation collecting coins. It is so appreciated how many of the adults are sure to give coins to each of the children's collection cans. The monies are split 50/50 between The Mustard Seed and Operation 143. The 2025 total : \$ 776.00. In November, we switched to help support Reach Out-Nepal. Thank you all!

Confirmation Class In 2025, we had a class of two lovely young ladies, Lydia Brown and Archie Young. They completed all requirements, as well as putting together a very successful Capstone project: Clean-Up Buckets. The girls created posters, made a presentation to the congregation and raised enough money to purchase and put together 10 complete buckets. They were confirmed in May. We enjoy seeing them continue to be part of our Falkner Swamp family.

The Adults have been strengthening and sharing our relationship and understanding of God's plan through weekly Scripture Studies meetings. We meet on Tuesdays 1:00-2:00pm. Our topics range from looking at the many religions amongst the many cultures, as well as dissecting and discussing the scriptures that will be used in the upcoming Sunday Service. Treats have also started to show up from time to time. If you have a free Tuesday afternoon, come join us..

We look forward to continuing our efforts in supporting our members, friends and neighbors as our faith continues to grow and expand. Please feel free to share any ideas you may have.

In God's Love,
Frances, Becky, and Susan

Women's Ministries

Women's Ministries Yearbook 2025



Women's Ministries meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 10 am. All women of the church are welcome to join.

Service to our church and community

- Donated money to the Dinner Mission
- Coordinated Red Food Drive for BAMS (256 pounds)
- Donated Easter Baskets to BAMS
- Helped with our annual Peanut Butter Egg Fundraiser
- Donation made to Confirmands' bucket project
- Made gifts to honor our men for Father's Day
- Sponsored bulletin on June 1 to honor graduates
- Purchased and filled backpacks for BAMS
- Sponsored Operation 143 mission food project
- Donated \$50 each to Wounded Warriors for Veterans Day and BAMS for Thanksgiving
- Sponsored a child for Christmas through BAMS
- Designated donations from Arlene's Memorial Fund for graduate & Confirmand gifts and 300th Anniversary Fund
- Sponsored carnations in honor of Arlene for Mother's Day
- Spearheaded a tissue drive for local schools
- Donated money to BAMS to help those in need during government shutdown

Social

- Ladies Night
- Lunch and meeting held in June at Copperfield
- Breakfast at Sunflower Café in December attended by 22 church members

Fundraisers

- Hosted a Winter Sale of various crafts and goods

Members: Carol Stevens, Olga Rees, Eleanor Specht, Linda Sell, Judy Miller, Ellen Whitfield, Joanne Lewis, Beth Reese, Susan Mercer, Val Horne, Vicki Fronheiser, Barbara Geary-Secretary, Sharon Sgriccia-Treasurer.

2025 Women's Ministries Fund Summary	
\$1,090	Beginning Balance
\$1,549	fundraising proceeds
\$250	Falkner Swamp donations/expenses (goods & money)
\$1,077	donations to outside organizations (goods & money)
\$1,312	Ending Balance

Falkner Swamp Reformed Church of the United Church of Christ

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE – Yearbook Report for 2025

Chair: Becky Comer

Members: Lee Heffner, Deborah Lord, Kenneth Berkowitz, Barry Chester, Becky Comer

Rev. Frances Chester - Pastor

Defacto Consistory President - Karen Miller

Category A (Unrestricted Principal/Income)

Account #1 \$42,837.99 CD 883704-1003 @Citadel Credit Union

Rate 4.25% - Matures April 8, 2026

Balance 12/31/25 - \$45,130.10 (+\$5.00 Savings Acct.)

Signers- Lee Heffner & Ken Berkowitz

Account #2 High Yield Savings Acct. 883704-0001 @Citadel CU
Balance 12/31/25 - \$25,371.11 (3.35% Variable Interest rate)

Account #3 \$30,646.18 CD 883704-1007 @Citadel CU
Rate 4.60% - Matures March 18, 2026
Balance 12/31/25 - \$32,475.20
Signers - Lee Heffner and Ken Berkowitz

Account X Promissory Note (Working Together)
Awaiting Dissolution Payment

Total A (1-3) **\$102,981.41 on 12/31/2025**

Category B (Restricted Principal/Unrestricted Income)

Account #1 \$28,501.47 - CD 883704-1001 @Citadel CU
Rate 4.35% - Matures May 27, 2027
Balance 12/31/25 - \$29,239.84
Signers - Lee Heffner and Ken Berkowitz
Interest to go to general fund annually (when CD matures).
Principal to be reinvested.

Category C Restricted Principal/Restricted Income

Account #1 \$2,400.00 - CD 883704-1008 @Citadel Credit Union
Rate 4.35% - Matures May 27, 2027
Balance 12/31/25 - \$2,462.20
Signers - Lee Heffner and Ken Berkowitz
Interest (58.5% OCWM, 41.5% Organ Repair)
Principal to be reinvested



Cleaning Teams Report for 2025

Things are going very well with our Cleaning Teams and the cleaning of the church. We have all worked hard to keep the church tidy and clean. As every member of Falkner Swamp knows, it is everyone's job to keep the church clean. We ask the congregation to also do their part, i.e., if they see something out of place or in need of cleaning, you may want to take the time and return it to its proper place or even do a little cleaning. You may also contact one of us. **We would like to give a BIG THANK YOU to the 2025 Cleaning Teams.**

We are in need of cleaners for the months of May and July. Please see Becky Comer or Brenda Semach if you are interested in joining a cleaning team.

Brenda & Becky



- ◆ Red Food Collection February 1—March 1
Women's Ministries will be collecting "red" food items to donate to Boyertown Area Multi-Service. Spaghetti sauce, Jello, tomato soup, ketchup, etc.
- ◆ Community Breakfast helpers—1st Saturday February—May (see the sign up in Fellowship Hall)
- ◆ Peanut Butter Egg Making: March 16-20 starting @ 9 AM daily until ? Any and all help welcome and needed. Last year we had great support for this church fundraiser and it was very successful. Many hands made light(er) work. We hope to have the same level of help this year. Please come out to support our church and enjoy some fun & fellowship! Please note: price this year will be \$15/box



Pollinator Garden

This year, for the first time, we had numerous Monarch butterfly chrysalises in the garden. Some were on the brick wall behind the garden, some were high up near the roofline, and others were in various places near the garden. Since we cannot monitor the garden 24/7, we don't know whether any emerged into butterflies and migrated. However, we think it is a hopeful sign that so many eggs were laid in the garden this year.

The rain barrel and sprinkler system continues to work efficiently, and Jim has ideas for further improvements in 2026.

The garden is currently wintering over. Bees sometimes spend the winter in the dead stalks of perennials, so we will not cut back the stalks until spring.



Bee on Joe Pye Weed

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

In 2025, we continued to collect plastic bags for recycling. However, the organization we were supporting no longer has room for our donations, so our collection bin was removed in August. In 2026, we plan to find another organization to support. Stay tuned for more information.

In December, we provided seasonal ceramic mugs for coffee hour and Christmas with the Dogs to support reducing, reusing, and recycling. We encourage members to continue this practice by bringing a reusable mug on Sundays. We have volunteers to wash them.

We continue to plant seeds for faithful actions to help our planet. Some suggested actions for church and home are:

- Bring our own coffee mugs for church social events to reduce/eliminate Styrofoam cups (Styrofoam takes 500 years or more to biodegrade in landfills).

- Recycle plastic bags and use reusable shopping bags whenever possible.

- Use real or paper plates.

- Use large hand soap refills instead of buying new small bottles.

- Use cloth table covers.

- Use tulle to wrap raffle baskets.



Monarch Caterpillar

Two of our members joined Climate Hope Affiliates, a joint initiative of the United Church of Christ and Creation Justice Ministries, which represents 36 different denominations that come together in common cause to care for God's planet and God's people. For more information, visit ucc.org/climatehope

Respectfully submitted,

The Green Team, Stacey Brennan & Deb Lord



FUNdraising Committee Report 2025

Objective remains to raise funds to assist with maintaining the church budget, in addition to assisting with special items that might require funding not included in the budget.

The monies collected are placed in the General Fund, unless otherwise specified.

2025 Committee Members:

Rob Krause, Cassandra Krause, Karen Miller, Larry Ercolino, Jim Fahy, Barb Geary, and Patty Fritz

A Big Thank You to Larry Ercolino for stepping in as committee chair!

2026 welcomes new member Stacey Brennan

2025 Yearly goal - \$2,500

Bake Sale 4/12 \$47

Bazaar 4/26 \$2,806

Donated \$500 to the Anniversary Committee for the 300th Anniversary Celebration

December Basket Raffle \$380

Upcoming Confirmed 2026 Events

Trivia Night 2/28

Allentown Phantoms Faith & Family Night 3/15

Bake Sale 3/28*

Trunk or Treat 10/24 or 10/25

Mum Sale 8/30 – 10/3*

Annual Basket Raffle 11/21-12/12*

*Denotes Fundraiser vs Event for FUN

Stewardship Committee Report 2025

The Stewardship Committee began meeting in August 2024 after taking a critical look at how our church was meeting the characteristics of being a Mission-forward congregation. We worked in conjunction with Consistory, the Budget Committee, and the FUNdraising Committee. Currently there are five members: Karen Miller, Lee Comer, Diane Weller, Susan Mercer, and Rev. Frances Chester (ad hoc).

The Committee generally met once a month after church in the Conference Room after the Service and Fellowship/Snack time. As noted in last year's report, the Committee wanted to increase transparency and communication to keep everyone more aware of our financials and our missions great and small. Our committee's goal was to help develop a loving spirit of Gratitude and Generosity in all.

We researched and created ways to discuss stewardship with the Congregation, using the Time-Talent-Treasure theme. During church services, we delivered Stewardship seeds – either a short message about being a good steward or an update. Stewardship seeds included:

- A poem and a penny
- Spotlighting Time and Talent – the many missions, ministries, committees, and services performed at Falkner Swamp. Three hallway banners were hung on display that demonstrated Time, Talent and Treasure
- Progress report with a bar graph was presented, which was also included in the church program
- The display wall of bricks created in 2024, which highlighted known and lesser-known acts of Time and Talents given in our church and beyond its walls, remained throughout the year.

In between meetings, research was conducted on developing a stewardship campaign and pledge cards. Stewardship pledge cards were developed and refined over months until a final draft was approved. In addition, Rev. Frances crafted an introductory letter to be sent with the stewardship pledge card; and the Committee created a page to be included which asked the Congregation to give prayerful consideration to the Church's mission and what they can provide in terms of time, talent and treasure.

The Stewardship Campaign which was decided upon included four parts:

Week 1, September 7, 2025 – **The Invitation**

A "giant" invitation was delivered to the congregation and friends to be part of our Stewardship campaign. Letters were also mailed.

Week 2, September 14, 2025 – **The Mission**

Several members spoke to the congregation about why and how they give. A paper chart was also available on the table in the vestibule called Why I Give.

Week 3, September 21, 2025 – **The Dedication I**

An insert in the bulletin asked the congregation to write down their own personal thoughts about giving Time, Talent and Treasure.

Week 4, September 28, 2025 – **The Dedication II and Thanksgiving**

All returned pledge cards were dedicated to God and our missions here at Falkner Swamp. We celebrated with sundaes during Fellowship afterwards.

As of December 31, 2025, the church has received 33 stewardship pledge cards. Thank you!

Peter 4:10: Each of us should use whatever gifts we have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace.

Please think about joining this Committee, remembering that we are indeed the Hands and Feet of our Lord.

300th Anniversary Committee Report for 2025

Falkner Swamp held a 300th Anniversary celebration on October 12, 2025, marking the first Communion of 40 worshippers with its first pastor, John Philip Boehm, on October 15, 1720, in a log house not far from our present location. This act became known as the birth of the German Reformed church in Colonial America. The first Communion also led to Boehm's eventual ordination, and he went on to found several more churches and helped create the German Reformed denomination in our country.

Lee and Peg Heffner chaired our committee, members listed below, which formed in January 2025 and met regularly through August to plan events to celebrate this momentous anniversary. All meetings were scribed thanks to the dedication of Barb Cole, and reviewed and approved by all members.

The team created items to raise awareness and funds: gray nylon shopping bags as giveaways, now on sale for \$2 each; white t-shirts to be worn at the 10 am service on October 12; a 300th Anniversary book, 1975-2025: Reflections on 50 years, in pictures and in words, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Sue Dickey. In addition, several members reached out to local community publications alerting them to events for potential coverage.

The committee thanks the FUNdraising team, who donated \$500 of their proceeds from their first Bazaar, held April 26, to benefit our 300th Anniversary.

To commemorate our Anniversary the committee held the following events:

- Organ concert with Vince Ryan, also demonstrating Orgelkids, a mini-organ assembled on site to invite audience participation, on May 31
- (The Music & Worship Committee enabled this opportunity; the 300th team is grateful!)
- Bake Sale at Freed's on Sept 13
- *Echoes of Faith*, with speakers Drs Kevin and David Sterner, descendants of John Philip Boehm and authors of a new book about him, Man of Spirit. A display of artifacts from the cases, tours of the building and cemetery, and an ice-cream sundae bar rounded out the events held on Sept 20
- Oct 12, 2025, two worship services 10 and 3 pm. A catered lunch reception followed our 10 am service. The 3pm worship was followed by a cake reception. The worship liturgy was planned by a separate state-wide committee of clergy and lay people. UCC General Minister and CEO Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, preaching. Nearly 200 people filled our sanctuary, coming from all across the state. The worship service can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hWRzWm4Z7A

(continued on next page)

- Speaking to the wider church, Rev. Thompson's parting words included: "Know this. That just as God walked with the ancestors who gathered here in this place 300 years ago, God will walk with you." Jeremiah 29:11, focus scripture: *For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

Items still available for purchase:

- Gray shopping bag, church name & logo, \$2 each.
- The 300th anniversary Book, (yellow cover), \$25 each, book or on flashdrive.

Let a Committee member know if you'd like to purchase anything.

The following two books are also available to purchase:

- Evolution of an Inclusive Faith: 300 Years of the German Reformed Faith in the US (\$20), go to the Keystone Conference website at keystoneucc.org
- Man of Spirit: John Philip Boehm of the Pennsylvania Germans, (\$45) call the PA German Historical Society at 717-597-7940

Committee Members: Lee & Peg Heffner, co-chairs; Ken and Fran Berkowitz, Barb Cole, Sue Dickey, Debbie Lord. Rev. Frances, ex-officio.

Submitted for the Committee by Rev. Frances

From the Church Office: Falkner Swamp membership statistics for 2025 [2024 in brackets]

Total Additions: 7 (2 new members, 2 Confirmands, 3 adjustments) [5]

Total Losses: 2 (1 death, 1 removal) [4]

Total Membership as of 12/31/2025 90 [85]

Total Baptisms: 4 [3]

Average Weekly Worship Attendance: 49 [49]

Falkner Swamp
UCC presents

TRIVIA NIGHT

FREE!

- 6 rounds of trivia
- Prizes each round for the winning team
- Teams of up to 6 people



For questions or to sign up, please email
falknerswampevents@gmail.com

Sat., Feb. 28, 2026
6:00 p.m.

Snacks and beverages will be provided

Please join us!

Falkner Swamp UCC

2077 Swamp Pike
Gilbertsville, PA

<https://falknerswamp.org>


Hosted by the
FUNdraising Team

Spring 2026 Calendar

- February 7 —Community Breakfast from 8—11 AM (also March 7, April 4 & May 2)
- February 18 —Ash Wednesday, 6:30pm Worship (CWS special offering)
- February 22 —1st Sunday in Lent (Church World Service special offering)
- February 28—Trivia Night 6 PM
- March 15—Allentown Phantoms Faith & Family Night (see sign-up in Fellowship Hall)
- March 16 - 20—peanut butter egg making 9 AM—?
- March 29 —Palm Sunday (One Great Hour of Sharing special offering)
- April 2—Maundy Thursday (Church World Service special offering)
- April 5—Easter Sunday



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.

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.