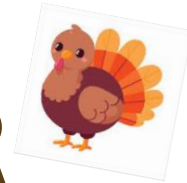




NEWSLETTER



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:

~Keystone Conference information

~Stewardship update

~Holiday happenings – Advent, Holiday Sale, Basket Raffle



JOYFUL NOISE OFFERING

The Joyful Noise offering will now be collected by our children on the **fourth Sunday** from September through May. The children will also sing before the collection. The collection will be divided between the following organizations.

Operation 143

Operation 143 is focused on addressing the issue of childhood hunger. The organization partners with donors, community groups, schools and volunteers to ensure students have food to sustain them over the weekend when school meals are not available. The name "143" represents the universal number for "I Love You," reflecting their mission of care and compassion for children.

Reach Out-Nepal

Reach Out-Nepal helps educate children and women in Nepal. They operate a "hostel" providing housing, safety and education for up to 12 girls. They also operate 4 free learning centers for about 200 children along with many other charities in the region of Nepal. They currently have 23 pastors who pastor to 35-40 churches.

Dear Falkner Swamp Family,

The phrase “separation of church and state” came up recently here at church. It’s in the news more often due to a push by “Christian nationalists” – some are cabinet members in the federal government, elected Senators and Representatives, and the clergy they call to Washington DC in support. Many tacitly support Christian nationalism, whether they attend church or not, because they are in favor of all that is being done by the current federal administration.

Christian nationalism is a dangerous movement for our nation and twists faith in the salvation Jesus brings. In brief, it is the desire to overlay our nation’s laws with an exclusive worldview and is unlawful due to the Establishment Clause in the first amendment, despite its supporter’s insistence that it is legal. “Separation of church and state” is often repeated to make claims against such movements like Christian nationalism.

The phrase, “separation of church and state” is not in the Constitution but was first written by 3rd President Thomas Jefferson in his letter to the Danbury Baptists in Connecticut, on January 1, 1802, responding to their address of congratulations upon his election to President. Thomas wrote: *... I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.* <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danbury.html>

The words in quotes, the Establishment Clause, will be familiar to you as one of five freedoms accorded citizens in the First Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The Establishment Clause seeks to prevent the rise of a state religion, such as Christian Nationalism, while also allowing people’s free expression of whatever religion they may practice. As history shows us, this is a delicate balancing act.

Many will recall the 1962 Supreme Court case, *Engel vs. Vitale*, in which the Establishment Clause was used to fight prayer in public schools. The Court relied upon Jefferson’s “wall of separation” to support the plaintiff. While the Court understood the historic government recognition of religion, the majority held that it is “no part of the business of government to compose official prayers” for any segment of the population, even if the prayer is neutral and voluntary. Do you remember your or your parent’s reaction to this ruling, and if so, what do you think now?

Separation of church and state is a necessary wall to keep this delicate balance. But that doesn’t mean there must be a separation of faith and politics. Texas Representative James Talarico shared in a recent podcast that religion is at its best when it brings a challenge to the dominant powers. He cited religion’s successful challenge of powers such as empires and feudal systems of long ago, and more recently American slavery and Jim Crow laws.

Talarico differentiates Christian Nationalism from Christian activism. “Our faith should move from the pew to the streets,” he said.

I couldn’t agree with him more.

Sources for this article: Library of Congress Information Bulletin, June 1998, *‘A Wall of Separation’: FBI Helps Restore Jefferson's Obliterated Draft*, by James Hutson, found at <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danbury.html>, and *American Conversations: Representative James Talarico*, YouTube video with Heather Cox Richardson and Rep. James Talarico, Oct 10, 2025, found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8VFcBmE53A>.

Also this past month

I went with Rev. Ann Few and Patty Fritz **to the Covenant Association meeting on Sunday afternoon, Oct 26**, held at Church of the Good Shepherd in Tuckerton. Rev. Paul Jones came on his own, and it was a happy little Falkner Swamp reunion for a moment when we all saw each other after the meeting.

And what an uplifting and encouraging meeting it was! Framed entirely by worship, we gathered for conversation around tables in the fellowship room about what our hopes are for current ministries we are part of. We then processed into the sanctuary while singing "Blessed Assurance."

Our business was interpolated among prayers, hymns, a large and lovely choral anthem, a solo bell anthem executed with skill and grace, scripture, messages from Moderator Rev. Sharon Morris and Conference Minister Rev. Bill Worley, and concluding with Communion. **We ended early.** It couldn't have been a more perfect meeting!

Much of the business of the meeting centered on the upcoming Keystone merger. To that end, I'd like to give you the following dates so that you can plan to participate. If there was one unifying message to the afternoon, it was: **We need faithful people to do this new thing together for our future.**

- **Fall Conference Meeting – November 8 – Final meeting of the PSEC, St. Paul's UCC in Amityville.** a meeting of closure and celebration of PSEC's 63 years of ministry. No delegates needed but it will be an historic celebration you don't want to miss!
- **Vote on Keystone Budget for 2026 on Zoom, Nov 22, 9:30 AM.**
- **Sunday, January 4, 2026 – Service of Appreciation and Release for PSEC staff.** 3 pm service followed by light reception, Ascension Church in Norristown. This will be your opportunity to say goodbye to Rev. Bill Worley.
- **Keystone Spring Meeting, Millersville University, June 5-7, Theme: "Joy at the table together."**

For all events you can register & access more information at www.psec.org.

With you on the journey,
Rev. Frances

UPDATE FROM THE STEWARDSHIP TEAM

Thank you to all who participated in the pledge campaign for 2026! We have received 33 completed pledge cards. Sharon Sgriccia calculated the total amount of the pledges and gave that total to our Budget Team so they can have an accurate number to work with in the "Income" column of our 2026 Budget.

Was there something you really appreciated about the pledge campaign? Or something that you have questions about, or didn't really enjoy? Please talk to any member of the Team to share your thoughts – we want to hear from you!

If you feel called to join the Stewardship Team, we would love to have some additional members. We generally meet once a month after worship.

The Stewardship Team: Lee Comer, Susan Mercer, Karen Miller, and Diane Weller



HOLIDAY SEASON BASKET RAFFLE

The FUNdraising Team is hosting a Christmas Basket Raffle again this year. At this time, we are looking for donations of baskets to be raffled, in a theme of your choosing (it can be Christmas-related, or not). Baskets will go on display and raffle tickets will be available for purchase beginning November 16, with the drawing happening after the worship service on December 14. Raffle tickets will be \$1 each, or 6 tickets for \$5. Please see Karen or Patty if you have any questions.

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 September 2025

Total funds available for general use at the end of August:	\$84,148.16
Total Income received in the month of September:	+\$15,630.24
Total Expenses paid in the month of September:	(\$16,907.01)
Total funds available for general use at the end of September:	\$82,871.39

The net financial results from general church activity for the month of September reflected a loss in the general fund of \$3,077.52 (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!

LOOKING FORWARD: ADVENT & CHRISTMAS



- Advent begins Sunday Nov 30. All invited to stay after worship to help decorate church. Pizza following for all helpers, courtesy of the Music & Worship Committee.
- Unveiling of new Advent paraments quilted by Peg Straub
- Dec 7 – Annual Congregational Meeting to vote on 2026 budget
- Dec 14 – Raffle Basket winners announced; Christmas Carol singing led by The Dogs, 1:30 – 2:30 with refreshments to follow.
- Dec 24th – Christmas Eve Service, 7 pm, Carols, Communion & Candles
- Dec 28 – Christmas Gifts
 - Informal service of Christmas hymns and sharing Christmas traditions. Come in “Christmas Comfortable” – PJs count!
 - Do you practice a beloved Christmas tradition? Consider sharing a brief story with your church family. You can step up to the lectern yourself or write them down and Rev. Frances will read it for you.



2 10 AM Worship w/ Communion All Saint's special offering 7 PM/AA Mtg.	3 7 PM M & W mtg.	4 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 10 AM Women's Ministries 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study	5 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	6 **Rev. Frances' office hours 7 PM FUNdraising mtg.	7	8 PSEC Fall Meeting 1 – 5 PM St. Paul's Amityville
9 10 AM Worship Baptisms of Elowyn Curran & Olivia Pangrazi 7 PM/AA Mtg.	10	11 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study	12 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	13 **Rev. Frances' office hours	14	15
16 10 AM Worship Apostolic Sunday Rev. Paul Jones 7 PM/AA Mtg	17 6:30 PM Consistory	18 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study	19 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	20 **Rev. Frances' office hours	21	22
23 10 AM Worship Joyful Noise special offering 7 PM/AA Mtg	24 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	25 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study	26 Church office closed.	27 	28	29
30 1st Sunday of Advent 10 AM Worship Future of F. S. & BAMS special offerings 7 PM/AA Mtg						

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.

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



Thank you to our Cleaning Crews! They keep all our church spaces sparkling & fresh. Our November cleaners are Susan Mercer, Joanne Lewis, Olga Rees and Cassandra Krause.

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



Women's Ministries Winter Holiday Sale

Sunday, November 9 – Sunday, December 14

Come check out the various items in Fellowship Hall following worship.

Something for everyone!

Wreaths, logs, snowmen, baked goods, and other surprises.

Fresh green logs available November 23.

Cash only.

Bob & the Barkers
(our very own Bob Schnaars)
playing on Saturday, December 20th from 5 – 6:30 PM
@ Bella Brew Pub
1355 North Gravel Pike
Perkiomenville, PA
Sing along to the mellow rock performance.

