



# 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:***

- ~Opportunities to Serve*
- ~July & August Calendars*
- ~Committee Updates*
- ~Graduates*

Can you solve these three rebus puzzles? The numbers in the brackets indicate how many letters are in each word of the answer. Feel free to email the church office for answers.

1. (3, 6, 3, 4)



2. (5, 2, 3)



3. (5, 4)



Dear Falkner Swamp Siblings in Christ,

I'm doing something different with my column for this two-month issue of our newsletter. Our country is turning 250, an occasion for us to become more learned and involved citizens. I'd like to share two historians whose work I find valuable – I'm sure you've heard of them too – as well as two books that are hot off the press and that I am looking forward to reading this summer.

Before I get to that, do you remember the Bicentennial, and what you understood or thought about our country? How has that changed? What events, people, or knowledge base helped shape your understanding now?

I was eight in 1976. Now you know my age! I remember sitting on the curb waiting for the parade to start down one of the main streets of our suburb. That year, my dad dressed up as a clown. I remember his polka-dotted white clown suit, floppy red shoes with red wig and nose to match, and the snow white make up that covered his face. It wasn't scary. I laughed when he came up to me and handed me a ... was it a balloon? Flag? Lollipop? I forget now. But the Spirit of '76 will forever be linked in my mind to my father's unusual 4<sup>th</sup> of July persona.

For the Semiquincentennial – this is the correct spelling even though spell-check doesn't like it – I probably won't attend a parade nor will I seek out fireworks. But I will continue to devote time and energy reflecting on our country's history. This brief conversation from our founding is worth taking seriously given various events in the past several years:

On September 17, 1787, as Benjamin Franklin left Independence Hall in Philadelphia at the close of the Constitutional Convention, a local socialite named Elizabeth Willing Powel approached him and asked, "Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?" Franklin immediately replied, "A republic, if you can keep it."

Now is a fantastic time to understand what Franklin meant. I've been looking to the following lay person's historians, who bring their passion for American history alive.

**Ken Burns**, the premier visual storyteller of America's history. From his Baseball series in 1994 Burns has been hitting it out of the ballpark since, chronicling American moments and people who helped form our country's character. **Check out *The American Revolution* on PBS.**

In a podcast interview (*The Best People with Nicolle Wallace, May 18*), **Burns** reminds us that we can get so focused on the either/or of what is happening in front of us. Without a steady view of our history, we lose sight of the process of our country becoming. There's not just one ruling or one action that changes everything, but a movement, a succession. Seeing our past helps us identify such movements in our present, and gives us better tools to meet them and shape a better future.

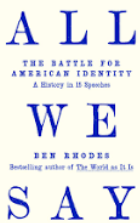
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**Heather Cox Richardson**, Professor of History, Boston College, and prolific YouTuber. Her newest project: **250 to 250 is on YouTube** and includes 250 stories about America. Each story is 124 words and lasts under a minute and a half, narrated by actors, professors, and former and current politicians.

Her “**Letters to an American**” originated on FaceBook and are now on Substack. Nearly every day she posts a mini history lesson on some aspect of American history for that day. She then reads it and posts on YouTube. As a guest on others’ podcasts, she will simply launch into storytelling mode. Seriously, she’s a wonder of information! You can sign up to receive her letters in your email or go to YouTube.

Books on my table:

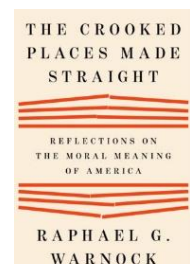


All We Say: The Battle for American Identity, A History in 15 Speeches by Ben Rhodes. Rhodes has international and national experience as former deputy national security advisor and speechwriter for Barak Obama. He is one of the most insightful authors of our time. “The greatest speeches are the ones that tell hard truths – that force us to confront the world as it is while

demanding that we pursue the world as we want it to be,” he writes. From Benjamin Franklin to Donald Trump these speeches are split into 3 sections and include well known figures to us today as well as popular figures in their time who are less recognized now (i.e., Red Jacket, Anna Dickinson)

The Crooked Places Made Straight: Reflections on the Moral Meaning of America, by Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock.

Warnock pastors Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr., was pastor, in Atlanta, GA, and wins admiration and votes from both political parties. He is a moral and political heavyweight with much to share. The title comes from Isaiah 40:4: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be Made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."



On a recent news show, Warnock explains why he wrote the book: “Americans are soul weary, because they’re seeing the ways in which Washington is stuck, because there are structural issues that encourage the kind of tribalism that we’re seeing: gerrymandering, dark money in our politics, the ways in which the primary is the whole game. What I try to do (in my book) is to get us to reimagine who we can be as we approach our 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.” (MS Now, June 22)

I hope I’ve given you some ideas or inspired you to look up your own sources for understanding our country and its history.

Happy exploring, reading, and reflecting this summer,  
Rev. Frances

**Be informed**



Keeping you in the loop

**The Samaritan Fund** is a donor-contributed line item in our budget that gives our church the ability to help individuals in need of support. Since its inception in 2020, we've helped people with housing, utilities, medical bills and car needs. Consistory reviews the needs as they arise and ensures we're following the guidelines set up for the fund.

Through your generous donations, we've been able to help three families in the past year. One elderly couple with medical bills following a significant health event; a single mother with three young children with car insurance; and currently a mother and adult daughter, who is recovering from major back surgery, as they move out of temporary housing in a motel to an apartment.

We learn of such needs through you, our members and friends, and from Boyertown Area Multi-Service referrals.

If you are in need of help, or know someone who is, we are here to do just that. Contact the church office at [falknerswamp@comcast.net](mailto:falknerswamp@comcast.net) and Sharon will forward the request to Consistory.



**Choir:** Hi Church Family! Our choir is always looking for voices to join us to sing! We know there are individuals who like to sing and folks that can sing even when they say they can't sing. We've told you before that a lot of our choir members cannot read music, but we try hard and we learn (Mrs. Erica Creed is a fabulous teacher). So reading music is not mandatory, but it is an opportunity to learn something new. Please take the summer to consider joining your church choir. As they say, "the more, the merrier". Choir practice will begin again in August - **tentatively** August 19, 2026 from 7:00 - 8:00 (sometimes a bit longer). Please feel free to talk to any choir member if you have questions. Thank you!

**Music & Worship:** Your church Music & Worship Committee/Team is always looking for new members. If you are thinking of joining a committee, perhaps you would consider Music & Worship. We meet once a month to discuss ideas to strengthen our church services, music, and worship experiences. Please reach out to any team member if you have questions or would want more information (Bob Schnaars, Sharon Schnaars, Jim Kooser, Peg Heffner, Brenda Becker, Fran Berkowitz, Ingrid Weil, or Rev Frances Chester). Thank you.

**Worship Helpers:** Falkner Swamp is always looking for volunteers to add to our list of Sunday morning servers (i.e. greeters, ushers, lay leader, acolyte, altar guild) . Any position that you may have an interest will be explained in more detail.

If you are interested in one or more, please contact Fran Berkowitz ([fberko@aol.com](mailto:fberko@aol.com)), Sharon Schnaars ([rd Schnaars@comcast.net](mailto:rd Schnaars@comcast.net)) or anyone on Music and Worship.

## 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 May 2026

Total funds available for general use at the end of April:	<b>\$91,477.67</b>
Total Income received in the month of May:	<b>+\$24,839.12</b>
Total Expenses paid in the month of May:	<b>(\$15,799.65)</b>
Total funds available for general use at the end of May:	<b>\$100,517.14</b>

The net financial results from general church activity for the month of May reflected a gain in the general fund of \$7,318.55 (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.*

*-Barb G., for relief from pain, and for treatments to bring healing so she can spend quality time with loved ones*

*-Betsy B., after a fall this week leaving her bruised, sore, and with difficulty walking*



			1	2	3	4
			Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	**Rev. Frances' office hours		
5 10 AM Worship w/Communion  7 PM/AA Mtg.	6	7 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	8 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	9 **Rev. Frances' office hours	10	11
12 10 AM Worship  7 PM/AA Mtg	13	14	No office hours for Sharon this week			18
		Rev. Frances' office hours 9 – 11 AM		**Rev. Frances' office hours	Reading Phils Game 7 PM	
19 10 AM Worship  7 PM/AA Mtg	20	21 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	22 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	23 **Rev. Frances' office hours	24	25
26 10 AM Worship  7 PM/AA Mtg	27 M & W meeting 7 PM	28 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	29 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	30	31	

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:



							<b>1</b>
<b>2</b> <b>10 AM Worship w/Communion</b> Rev. Paul Jones leading worship 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	<b>5</b> Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Rev. Frances' vacation: August 2 - 15</b>							
<b>9</b> <b>10 AM Worship</b> Rev. Paul Jones leading worship 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	<b>12</b> Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	
<b>16</b> <b>10 AM Worship</b> 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>17</b> Consistory 6:30 PM	<b>18</b> Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	<b>19</b> Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	<b>20</b> **Rev. Frances' office hours	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	
<b>23</b> <b>10 AM Worship</b> Apostolic Sunday Rev. Paul Jones leading worship 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	<b>26</b> Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	<b>27</b> **Rev. Frances' office hours	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	
<b>30</b> <b>10 AM Worship</b> Future of F.S. special offering Tailgate Fellowship 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>31</b>						

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



Thank you to our Cleaning Crews! They keep all our church spaces sparkling & fresh. We are in need of cleaners for July. 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 and can help out: 610-323-4053 or [falknerswamp@comcast.net](mailto:falknerswamp@comcast.net)



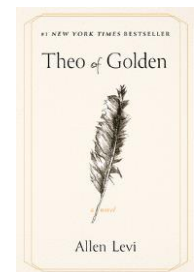
**Save the Date:** Worship and Tailgating on Sunday, August 30, 2026 on church grounds. Please plan to come and worship with us and stay after the service to tailgate with our church family. More information will follow, but we wanted you all to mark your calendars! Thank you. Music & Worship Committee



### What's your beach read this summer?

I'm #90 on the waiting list at the library (Chester County system) for Theo of Golden by Allen Levi. I was in the 400's, so I'm getting close!

I don't know much about it, but I've only heard rave reviews. Reader comments -- "such a 'feel good' book," "character-driven," and "themes of grace and forgiveness" have catapulted this book from a self-published, word-of-mouth wonder to a best seller. Hopefully I'll get it before my August vacation. ~ Rev. Frances



### **Community Breakfast Report for 2026:**

The amount of money that was raised from the Community Breakfasts was \$3,284.00. \$500 of that amount was donated to the New Hanover Fire Company and \$2,884.00 is going toward the lights in the sanctuary. These decisions were made by vote of the breakfast volunteers.

We want to thank the volunteers for coming out to help and for all their support, and also to thank those in the church and community who attended our four breakfasts.

2026 is our 10 year anniversary for serving breakfast to the community. And each year our numbers grew. Please join us next year in February 2027, for the start of our 11th year of serving breakfast to the community.



### **Cemetery and Property Workday:**

Our indoor workers included Robin Zerr, Sue Dickey, and Vickie Fronheiser who helped change the decorations in the fellowship room, and prepare the luncheon among other chores.

Our outdoor workers included Casey Shaak, Jim Kooser, Ron Becker, Bob Erb, Nate and Becky Baumgardner, Stacy and Kevin Brennan, and Bob Schnaars. Some of the tombstones in the Hollowbush cemetery were straightened, and at the upper cemetery graves were leveled and grass seed was spread over five graves. An expanded metal screening was partially buried in the dirt at the foundation of the east side of the church wall near the boiler room in an effort to stop the church groundhog from digging and hopefully "suggest" that he pack his bags and move on ... [so far to no avail], and some of the cement curb blocks in the parking lot were pulled back up the bank and repositioned. Weeding was done around the church. The wooden beam from the bell tower was moved to support the northwest corner of the parking lot along with a cement curb to make that area safer for parking.

Rob and Bob Erb moved dirt to help with the filling in of the grave sites at the Falkner Swamp Cemetery the week prior to the workday.

Robin Zerr provided a lunch of BBQ, potato salad, macaroni salad, potato chips and drinks for all the workers at noon on the workday.



**Starting July 26th...Tissues party**  
**(sponsored by Women's Ministries)**

A collection to benefit our local elementary schools. This will be ongoing through the month of August.

Please place your tissues in the box in Fellowship Hall.

Planning ahead ~ our annual Operation 143 food collection will begin in September. A list of requested items will be available. Stay tuned.



Our high school grads, Finn, Abby, and Isaiah.



Abby Keebler received her Ph.D. in Planetary Science on June 12, 2026, after completing a 5-year program at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech). For her research, Abby studied Earth's deserts as a member of NASA's EMIT mission. Abby has thoroughly enjoyed the many opportunities to travel related to her degree, including trips to Iceland, Jordan, Spain, and Mongolia. Abby has also loved exploring California and the southwest during this time, enjoying many backpacking trips in the Sierra Nevada mountains and Big Sur and climbing trips in the Mojave Desert. She is now pursuing a post-doctorate research position and is looking forward to her next adventures.