



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:

*~Stewardship Update
~introducing Rev. Dr. Thompson
~October calendar*



Our September 20th "Echoes of Faith" was a huge success. We had 45 people attend. We learned much about the history in our cemetery, the church building and about the history of how our German Reformed Church came to be. Drs. Kevin and David Sterner spoke on John Philip Boehm who served the 1st communion at Falkner Swamp UCC on October 15, 1725.

Our 300th Anniversary Sunday is on 10/12/2025. We will have our regular service at 10:00 am followed by a catered lunch for our church members. Please sign up for the lunch in the fellowship hall. We will have a 3:00 pm service with communion being served. If you are planning on attending the 3:00 pm service, please sign up on the sign-up sheet in fellowship hall. The reception that was going to be at 1:30 pm has now been moved to after the 3:00 pm service.

We have 300th Anniversary tee shirts for sale to be worn at the 10:00 am service on 10/12. See Peg Heffner if you have not yet ordered your shirt.

Please see Peg or Lee Heffner if you have not yet picked up your re-usable grocery bag with our 300th Anniversary logo on it.

Dear Falkner Swamp Friends,

Ordination vows to become an ordained UCC pastor include the following question, which is asked by an Association representative of the one to be ordained: *Will you be zealous in maintaining both the truth of the gospel and the peace of the church, speaking the truth in love?*

Twenty-one years ago, on Oct. 3, 2004, I answered affirmatively, “with the help of God.” As your pastor it’s my goal to follow through on speaking the truth of the gospel in love.

The truth of the gospel is multi-faceted. Like a crystal you can turn in the sun to reveal all kinds of rainbows, the gospel truth emits an abundance of possibilities. But the various lights share the same brilliance: that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection refract God’s unending mercy and grace, available to all who submit to the path Jesus models for us.

The path of Jesus asks of us submission to an authority above our own that will clash with the demands of the social, political, and economic powers that want to claim us. “Love me more than these,” Jesus asks.

In the midst of our current moment, I seek to be true to the vows I took and preach accordingly.

Each week as I prepare to preach, I read scripture alone and in community. I reflect on commentaries. I read the news of the day and wonder how the scripture speaks to it. I consider experiences you all have shared with me of your journey with God, as well as my own. I read fiction and non-fiction, poetry, and essays, and listen to podcasts and watch movies and TV shows. I listen to and read several pundits across political, religious and social lines.

Above all, I pray. I pray God guides my thinking and writing, and then my proclamation on Sundays.

I welcome conversation with you about anything you hear or read from me that moves you in any way. Especially in the times in which we live, engagement with each other is crucial. The truth of the gospel includes honest sharing between people of faith. Together, we live the gospel when we seek the truth in love.

With you on the journey,
Rev. Frances

Introducing Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson, UCC General Minister and CEO



Rev. Dr. Thompson will be worshipping with us on October 12, at the 3pm service. She will preach and co-officiate Communion with Rev. Frances.

The UCC national offices are in Cleveland. We are so fortunate to have her make this trip for the 300th anniversary of the first Communion of the German Reformed Church in the US!

Please welcome Rev. Dr. Thompson to our church.

About Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson

Rev. Dr. Thompson is the first woman and first woman of African descent to serve as leader of the denomination. She is a writer, poet and theologian who has contributed to numerous publications. Her book of poetry *Drums in Our Veins* was published in 2022.

From 2009 to 2023, Rev. Dr. Thompson served in various positions in the national UCC office focusing on racial justice, ecumenical and interfaith relations, and global ministries. Prior to joining the national staff in 2009, Rev. Dr. Thompson was a pastor in Florida then joined Conference staff as the Minister for Disaster Response and Recovery.

She was voted General Minister at the July 2023 General Synod.

Rev. Dr. Thompson's letters to and prayers for the church speak to how our faith meets the current news. She began "People's Prayers for Peace," a communal space on the UCC website where anyone can offer a prayer to lament, in support of neighbors, and in gratitude for God's grace. (Publishing the prayers is at the discretion of National Ministries of the UCC.) Here is a recent prayer from Rev. Dr. Thompson.

From People's Prayers for Peace, Sept 12, 2025 (find at ucc.org, click on "People's Prayers for Peace" slider)

Bring us back from the edge, O Lord, the edge where our humanity frays. Draw us closer to your everlasting light, as our lives are impacted again by the violence that pulses around us. Grant us wisdom to lower the guns and to eliminate the rhetoric which has become a relentless stream of violence. Provide us with words of hope where hope feels elusive and our desire for change seems long in coming.

Cleanse from us the toxic hate which fills our media, oozes into our town halls and public squares, and seeps into our schools and faith communities. May your love find us in new ways as we wrestle with the anger and animosity surrounding us.

We know that your light still shines, your path of peace remains close by, your Spirit is ever ready to guide us beyond the edge and into your love. Open our hearts to seek, find, and follow you. End the violence. Bring us back from the edge, O Lord we pray. Amen.

Stewardship September

Did you hear the phrases “Stewardship Campaign” and/or “Pledge Card” and feel anxious? Or annoyed? We hope not! Our goal, in addition to providing an accurate income line for the 2026 Budget Team, was to get everyone thinking about how we work together as a church, helping each other, our community, and the world. What does Falkner Swamp mean to me? What does Falkner Swamp do for others? Is it important to us? Are we making a difference?

Giving is so much more than dollars and cents – while we can’t deny the importance of being able to pay our wonderful staff and “keep the lights on,” we are also focused on the good we can do in the world. Sharing your time and talents are equally important, from being a committee or team member to participating in our many missions. There are so many facets to stewardship!

We start by acknowledging all of the blessings we have as individuals AND as a church family. On September 14, Stacey, Henry, and Judy shared with us why they give and what Falkner Swamp means to them. We heard three unique and insightful perspectives which gave us all some things to think about. On September 21, we asked everyone to finish the sentence “I give because...” and many of the answers acknowledged personal blessing, love for our church family, and a desire to make a difference in our community and in our world. Here are a few examples:

I give because:

...I love God

...I want our church and ministry to continue

...I’ve been blessed, pass it on

...I want our church to thrive for another 300 years

...I’m grateful for all that God has given to me

...this church teaches us the ways of Jesus and encourages us to put them into practice

...I want to do what I can to spread God’s light to the world

We are so grateful for everyone’s thoughtful participation in Stewardship September. We have received 26 pledge cards so far – thank you! Rev. Frances dedicated our pledges on September 28 during worship. You are welcome to submit your card after this date.

As always, 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



As a reminder, Sharon is in the church office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9 – 2. Outside of these days it is best to email her at falknerswamp@comcast.net. She checks emails regularly and will reply as soon as possible. Thanks.

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 August 2025

Total funds available for general use at the end of July:	\$84,709.25
Total Income received in the month of August:	+\$13,790.35
Total Expenses paid in the month of August:	(\$14,351.44)
Total funds available for general use at the end of August:	\$84,148.16

The net financial results from general church activity for the month of August reflected a loss in the general fund of \$2,850.33 (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!



Consistory has two very important dates for you this fall:

❖ **Thursday, October 9 @ 7:00 p.m. – Budget Team – first meeting**

We would love to see at least one member of every committee/team at the Budget Team meeting so all groups can be represented. But you don't have to be on any other committee to be a part of the Budget Team – come to the meeting and learn about the process of planning for our next fiscal year.

❖ **Sunday, December 7 after worship – Annual Congregational Meeting**

At this meeting, we will vote to approve the 2026 Budget as well as a minor change in language in our By-Laws (due to the combining of all four Pennsylvania conferences into one Keystone Conference).

HELLO OCTOBER

			1 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	2 **Rev. Frances' office hours 7 PM FUNdraising mtg.	3	4
5 World Communion Sunday 10 AM Worship w/ Communion Neighbors in Need special offering 7 PM/AA Mtg.	6	7 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 10 AM Women's Ministries	8 Steeple Raising Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	9 7 PM Budget Meeting	10	11
12 Anniversary Sunday 10 AM Worship Lunch to follow 3 PM State-wide service* 7 PM/AA Mtg	13 7 PM M & W mtg.	14 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	15 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	16 **Rev. Frances' office hours	17	18
19 10 AM Worship Apostolic Sunday Rev. Marian Shearer preaching 7 PM/AA Mtg	20 6:30 PM Consistory	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 Joyful Noise special offering 3 PM Covenant Assoc. Fall mtg. Good Shepherd UCC in Tuckerton 7 PM/AA Mtg	27	28 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	29 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	30 **Rev. Frances' office hours	31 *must register for 10/12 3 PM service, sign up on bulletin board	

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 October cleaners are Brenda Becker and Brenda Semach. 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

The woodwork in the sanctuary and foyer was cleaned by PA Yadira Cleaning on September 23rd. We are looking to have the hall floors polished next. Thank you to all that contributed to this cause. We will continue accepting donations as we consider more projects.



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 30.

Cash only.

Thank you to all who contributed to the Operation 143 collection. We had an overwhelming response and we are so grateful for the support of this congregation.

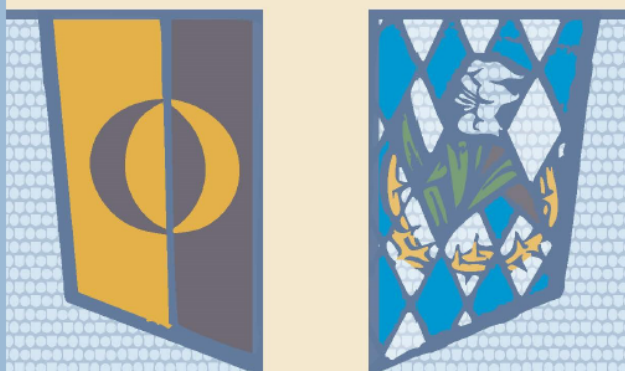
Echoes of Faith tour





Evolution of an Inclusive Faith

300 Years of the German Reformed Church
in the United States



Edited by Caroline A. Dunleavy

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.”

Hebrews 11:1-3 NRSV

From the Introduction: It is said that light may be described alternatively as a particle or a wave. The same may be said in some ways of history. It may be described as a series of “particles,” or events that give shape and form to our understanding of things in earlier days. It may also be understood as “waves” of broader movements that both absorb and make diffuse particular events from times past. In one sense, the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the historic Communion service on October 15, 1725 at Falkner Swamp is a truly important event that the United Church of Christ, especially in Pennsylvania, ought to celebrate and commemorate. In another sense, the event is a representation of the particle theory of history that should not be emphasized to exclusion of the wave theory, which tells the tale of broader movements in Reformed Christianity, European colonization, and the conditions of life in North America prior to the establishment of the United States.

Praise for *Evolution of an Inclusive Faith*

Each chapter reminds us that, even as we’re one in Christ, each individual and community is made up of various stories, and each story that we create and tell is important to the greater whole.

Rev. Dr. Sarah B. Drummond, Founding Dean, Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School

Reformed and reforming, united and uniting. These themes knit together the history and continuing influence of the German Reformed Church in this collection of essays celebrating its 300th anniversary of ministry in the United States.

Rev. Richard R. Berg, Director of Library Services (Retired), Lancaster Theological Seminary

Readers will learn that the German Reformed Church arose from a spirit of perseverance, community care, and bold vision—values that continue to shape the United Church of Christ today.

Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel, Pastor Emerita, Evangelical Reformed UCC, Frederick, MD

Book contributors:

Rev. David Ackerman, Dr. Lee C. Barrett, Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates, Rev. Carrie Call, Ph. D., Caroline A. Dunleavy, Rev. Dr. Charles A. Maxfield, Rev. Robert Robinson, Ph. D., Rev. James D. Robison, Jr., Rev. Richard H. Taylor, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson and Rev. William P. Worley



To Pre-order a book at the cost of \$20:

Click on the qrcode at right OR go to psec.org and click the donate button on the opening page. The first option will be the 300th Anniversary book.

