



Dec. 2019—Jan. 2020

THE VOICE

FALKNER SWAMP UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Tuesday, December 24th

3 PM—Family Service *Communion
*50/50 Offering

7 PM—Candlelight Service *Communion
*50/50 Offering

Advent Season worship and events see page 14



A family-centered community event to benefit the programs offered year-round at Boyertown Area Multi-Service

Friday, December 6
Saturday, December 7

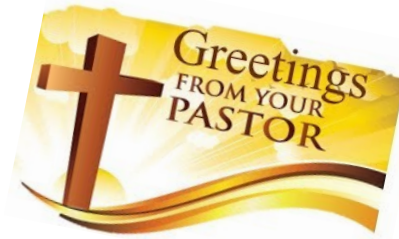
2019



This year the 300th Anniversary Committee is sponsoring a tree at the event. The event hours are Friday, December 6th from 3–9 PM and Saturday, December 7th from 10 AM–2 PM. Come out to see our tree and walk through a winter wonderland!

Dear Beloved Community,

Christmas is around the corner, in case you've missed it wherever you buy food. The urge to splurge on the season comes ever earlier. So too can our focus on what God is doing among us.



Starting right now, we can hear the words of the prophet Isaiah declare: "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

I need to focus on those words, because I'm already fast-forwarding to the later part of Christmas day. You know that time. Wherever or however you are spending the day, there's that sunken feeling in the pit of your stomach. It's over. And I'm still wanting ... and I notice the absence of ... And. And.

Part of this comes from what we do to ourselves. We stoke too much kindling on the display of Christmas than our soul can bear, and the fire burns us up. Should we try brining the turkey this year? And *all. that. wrapping.* Or whatever it is that you decide is important: decorating, writing cards, maybe booking your social calendar.

Another part of that heavy sense comes from the sadness of Christmas that is true for most of us. No one wants to "be a downer" so we don't talk about our loneliness and grief, which often shows as irritation or anxiety.

God calls us to the best of Christmas, the child born for us. We are invited to gather around the flame of incarnation, that God chose to become human and share our common lot.

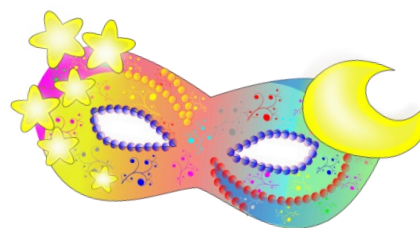
Christmas warms us with the glowing embers of Immanuel, "God with Us." The light spilling from the life that is Jesus helps us see our own dissatisfaction, loneliness, or grief. There, in light and in shadow, we can sit with our discomfort knowing God rests with us in it. This is a fire that will not consume but will bear with us and illumine our path.

We sit with whatever pain this season may bring, and experience along with it the best gift yet. A gift that keeps growing, shining, and bringing faith, hope, and love to the darkest of places, yours and mine. May it be so.

With you on the journey,

Rev. Frances

Fastnacht Social will be held on Friday, February 21, 2020. We are looking for performers (talent optional), audience, master of ceremonies, singers and people willing to participate in skits.



Please save the date and look for more info to follow.



**DECEMBER
BIRTHDAYS**



- 2 Joanne Lewis
- 3 Ellen Whitfield
- 4 Susan Mercer
- 11 Kim (Fronheiser) Kline
- 13 Amayah Baez
- 17 Penny Zerr
- 23 Corrie Shaak
- 27 Margaret Kline
- 30 Sharon Sgriccia
- 31 Lindsey App
- 31 Sue Dickey
- 31 Rachael (Schwenk) Connolly

**JANUARY
BIRTHDAYS**



- 2 Bonnie Beckley
- 2 Jordan Mercer
- 2 Samantha Mercer
- 5 Jessica Erb
- 6 Trevor Gey
- 21 Glenn Specht
- 24 Susan Fretz
- 30 Kim Albizer
- 30 Cailin Brennan
- 30 Barbara Fabian
- 30 Doris Moser

Annual Congregational Meeting 11-10-2019

Brenda Semach called the meeting to order @ 10:47 AM. A quorum was present. She thanked the various committees and ministries of the church. She also recognized the Consistory members. Four members will be ending their terms at the end of 2019. JoAnne Murray and Kim Shaak will be joining as new members to Consistory in 2020.

Rev. Frances Chester spoke about the budget not just as numbers on a page but a way to tell the church's story. How do we share our story?

Copies of the 2020 budget were distributed and Brenda Semach reviewed the changes. She also noted the shortfall of income and pointed out that while there is savings and endowment money, we don't want to rely on it.

By motion made by Rob Krause and seconded by Vicki Fronheiser, the congregation passed the 2020 budget.

Brenda Semach asked the congregation to think about the following: where do you see this church in 5 years? 10 years? What is your vision for this church? Where do you see yourself in this vision?

Russ Miller thanked Brenda Semach for her service as Consistory president.

Jane Harvey thanked the congregation for their support of the Mustard Seed in Malawi and gave a brief update.

Rev. Frances closed the meeting with a prayer.

Barb Geary made a motion to close the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 AM.

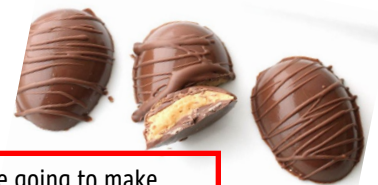
Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Sgriccia

Recording Secretary



Special Offerings for the 2020 calendar are still under consideration. Look for info in the February VOICE. There is no Special Offering in January.



Robin is planning to oversee the peanut butter eggs again this year. We are going to make them four days a week for a two week period, as we did last year. It is a good fundraiser for the church and the proceeds will go into current expenses.

The dates are:

March 23-26

March 30—April 2

Many hands make lighter work. We hope that we get plenty of help. It is a good time to get together and share fellowship. Keep your eyes open for more information.

Thank you very much,

Robin



Community Breakfast

Community Breakfasts will start up again in 2020! The first one is scheduled for February 1, 2020. We hope you can come out and help or just to eat! Tell your friends and bring them along. There will be a helper sign up sheet or let me know you can help when you see me.

Tentative dates for 2020:

Feb. 1, March 7, April 4, May 2

More to come,

Robin

DECEMBER 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Communion	2 7 PM Music & Worship	3 9 AM Women's Ministries Breakfast	4 7 PM Choir	5	6	7 Christmas w/ the Dogs 2—4 PM
8	9	10	11 7 PM Choir	12	13	14 9:30—11:30 AM Caroling @ Freed's
15 Youth Sunday	16 7 PM Consistory	17	18 7 PM Choir	19	20	21
22	23	24 Christmas Eve details on front cover	25	26	27	28
Office closed Dec. 23—Jan. 1						
29 Apostolic Sunday	30	31				

Sundays at Falkner Swamp:

◇ 9 AM Sunday School ◇ 10 AM Worship ◇ 11:30 Fellowship Time ◇ 7 PM AA Meeting

Dec. 1— Communion, Boyertown Area Multi-Service offering

Dec. 8 — Hanging of the Greens

Dec. 15 — Youth Sunday, Joyful Noise Offering

Dec. 22— Church School Christmas drama

Dec. 29— Bob Schnaars leading worship, Future of Falkner Swamp offering

Rev. Frances Hours: (generally) M & TH varies T & W mornings & by appointment Sabbath on Fridays	Secretary Hours: (generally) Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 9AM-2PM
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JANUARY 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 9 AM—2 PM Blood Drive
5 Communion	6 7 PM Music & Worship	7	8 7 PM Choir	9	10	11
12 PND Meal	13	14 6:30 PM Property	15 7 PM Choir	16 7 PM 300th Anniversary Mtg.	17	18 Faith Formation Crockpot Cook-off
19 Youth Sunday	20 7 PM Consistory	21	22 7 PM Choir	23	24	25
26	27	28 7 PM Faith Formation Mtg.	29 7 PM Choir	30	31	

Sundays at Falkner Swamp:

◇ 9 AM Sunday School ◇ 10 AM Worship ◇ 11:30 Fellowship Time ◇ 7 PM AA Meeting

Jan. 5— Communion

Jan. 12 — PND Meal

Jan. 19— Youth Sunday, Joyful Noise Offering

Jan. 26— Service of the Word

Rev. Frances

Hours:
(generally)
M & TH varies
T & W mornings
& by appointment

Sabbath on
Fridays

Secretary Hours:

(generally)
Tuesdays,
Wednesdays,
Thursdays
9AM-2PM

"All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we're giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That's one of the things that connects us as neighbors--in our own way, each one of us is a giver and a receiver."
Fred Rogers



God's Grace and peace to you,

The consistory met on Monday October 21st @ 7 pm.

The consistory team continues to support the ministries of our church , working together with these committees, Property, Endowment, Kitchen, Visitation, Faith and Formation (formerly Christian Education), Music and Worship , Cemetery , Women's Ministry and the 300th Anniversary .

With much help and support from the ministries of this church, the Consistory members, Reverend Frances and this awesome congregation, the budget for 2020 was voted on and passed at the congregational meeting on Sunday November 10th, 2019.

My hope as your Consistory President is that everyone prays for guidance on the vision and future of Falkner Swamp and how and where we should use our gifts for that vision.

What gifts has God blessed you with?
How does God want you to share those gifts ?

Deuteronomy 16:17 New Living Translation (NLT)
17 All must give as they are able, according to the blessings given to them by the Lord your God.

God's Grace and peace be with you,
Brenda Semach
Consistory President

Consistory wishes you to know that in case of inclement weather...

If you are wondering whether or not church will meet, Consistory plans to spread the word in these ways. Consistory members will all be informed if church is closed. There will be no phone chain to call members.

*In case of
Inclement
Weather*



Channel 69 news of WFMZ

Flocknote – sign up for email or text if you haven't already

Facebook

Additionally, Laura Brown (volunteer CE director) will decide regarding Church School/Confirmation and will post on Facebook and make calls to teachers/parents.

If you are still unsure, please use your best judgment based on conditions where you are. You are welcome to call a Consistory member.

PRAYGROUND

Consistory, in conjunction with the Music and Worship Committee and Faith Formation, would like to introduce a new concept at Falkner Swamp called a “Prayground.” This will be an area at the front right corner of the sanctuary where young children could play or color quietly during the service. We will have the area stocked with some quiet toys and coloring supplies.



The intention is to have a place for our youngest members (through Kindergarten age) to play during the service so their parents can enjoy the service. They will also be absorbing scripture, music, prayers, and lessons because they are staying in the sanctuary (sneaky, aren't we?).

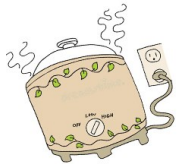
On the third Sunday of each month, we do not currently have any volunteers scheduled for the nursery, partly because that service is geared toward our youth. However, we still want parents with young children to be able to enjoy the service without stressing about entertaining their children in the pews or trying to keep them quiet. Parents are asked to sit near the Prayground in case their children need them.

Although the goal is to staff the nursery the remaining Sundays, parents are welcome to use the Prayground on any Sundays they would like. We hope to begin a 6-week trial of the Prayground on January 19.



A TASTE OF FALKNER SWAMP
THIRD ANNUAL

CROCKPOT COOKOFF



WHEN

Saturday, January 18 , 2020

11am-2pm

WHERE

Falkner Swamp UCC
2077 Swamp Pike
Gilbertsville, PA 19525

610-323-4053

Admission :

\$7 Adults

\$3 Kids 5-12

\$1 Kids 5 and under

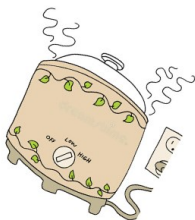
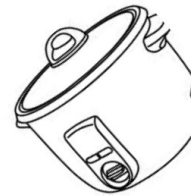
All proceeds benefit Youth Programs!

SPONSORED BY

Christian Education and
Faith Formation



www.falknerswamp.org





We are again collecting gift cards for Bethany Children's Home. There is a display in the fellowship room near the piano. You can take a star with a store name to remind you or you can take a blue card with the stores listed. Please return gift cards by Dec. 8th and place them in the box on the table in front of the display. Any monetary amount is appreciated.



Sunday, January 12

Menu: lasagna (traditional and vegetarian), salad



Christmas Cheer

Tuesday, December 17th
noon—2 PM

Creating Christmas cookie plates for our homebound members & friends

Stay for lunch (either bring your own or bring money for pizza).

If you can, please contribute 2 dozen cookies (one dozen for sharing & one dozen for the plates).

Come even without cookies and enjoy the fellowship.

Can't come that day, you can still contribute cookies. Leave them in the church kitchen clearly marked.

Look for a sign up soon!

LIVING OUR FAITH IN CHURCH SEASONS

ADVENT, CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY

Advent (from Latin, adventus, meaning "coming towards") is a four-week season of preparation for Christmas. The First Sunday of Advent (November 30) marks the beginning of the church's year.

Advent and Christmas focus both on the past--the coming of Jesus as an infant born into poverty in Bethlehem, and the future--the coming of Christ in glory to fulfill God's loving purposes for humanity. This past and future orientation is reflected in the readings appointed in the church for each Sunday of Advent.

Sunday and Special Day readings this year (Year A, Revised Common Lectionary Cycle of readings) are:

Advent

Dec 1 – Old Testament: Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 122

New Testament: Romans 13:11-14 and Matthew 24:36-44

Dec 8 - Old Testament: Isaiah 11:1-10 and Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

New Testament: Romans 15:4-13 and Matthew 3:1-12

Dec 15 -Old Testament: Isaiah 35:1-10 and Psalm 146:5-10

New Testament: James 5:7-10 and Matthew 11:2-11

Dec 22 - Old Testament: Isaiah 7:10-16 and Psalm 80 :1-7, 17-19

New Testament: Romans 1:1-17 and Matthew 1:18-25

Christmas

Christmas Eve, Dec 24- Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96

New Testament: Revelations 21:1-6a and Matthew 25:31-46

Christmas Day, Dec 25 - Old Testament: Isaiah 52:7-10 and Psalm 98

New Testament: Hebrews 1;1-4, (5-12) and John 1:1-14

Dec 29: Old Testament – Isaiah 63:7-9 and Psalm 148

New Testament: Hebrews 2:10-18 and Matthew 2:13-23

Epiphany (from Greek, meaning to show or to manifest) is a feast day of the church's year. Epiphany falls on the last of the twelve days of Christmas. The Gospels for this season all have to do with the manifestation of the identity of Jesus - starting with the wedding at Cana and ending with Transfiguration.

Celebrating God coming to earth in human form, Epiphany reminds us that Jesus comes to the world for all people. Wrapped up in the idea of ta theophania (The Theophany), as 4th century bishop Gregory of Nazianzus noted, is the understanding that "God is With Us." We are not alone.

In the birth of Jesus at Christmas, hope has come and has been made known to us. During this part of the liturgical cycle of the church at Epiphany, we not only reflect upon Christ's Baptism but what we are called to do, because of our baptism, in the church and in the world.

In worship we mark the season with the day of Epiphany on January 6 and the Baptism of Christ, the first Sunday following. This year, we'll celebrate the day of Epiphany on January 5.

Epiphany (First 2 weeks of 7-week Season)

Jan 5- Old Testament: Jeremiah 3:7-14 and Psalm 147:12-20

New Testament: Ephesians 1:3-14 and John 1:1-9, 10-18

Jan 12 – Baptism of Christ – Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1-9 and Psalm 29

New Testament: Acts 10:34-43 and Matthew 3:13-17

A prayer of Illumination before reading Scripture in these seasons:

Holy God, fill me with wonder and hope at the coming of your light in Jesus. Let these ancient words speak in my heart and illumine my thoughts. Help me see the light of Christ in all whom I meet today. Amen.

Christmas Fun Fact: Orthodox Christmas

Orthodox Christmas is January 7. Why the difference? An article from The Sun, a British newspaper, explains: "The reason these dates vary so much from what we know as Christmas is down to a difference in calendars. In the West, we use the Catholic-created Gregorian calendar, which was introduced by Pope Gregory in 1582. Spain, Portugal, France, Poland, Italy, Catholic Low Countries and Luxemburg were the first nations to adopt it.

But, in much of the Soviet bloc and Middle East, they still use the Julian calendar - which was created by Julius Caesar in 45BC. This means that there is a 13-day gap between the two calendars, so Christmas Day in those nations falls on what we now know as January 7.

Nowadays, most Orthodox countries follow the Gregorian calendar, but still observe a number of religious holidays on the Julian dates." <https://www.thesun.co.uk/fabulous/5258712/orthodox-christians-christmas-day-january-7/>

Do you know anyone who celebrates Orthodox Christmas? Think back to your grandparents or their ancestors. You probably know someone who celebrates it now, or did generations ago.

Upcoming Services

ADVENT SEASON WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE

- * Sunday, Dec 1 – 1st Sunday of Advent. We will begin lighting the Advent Wreath, and we will celebrate both Communion and the Baptism of Violet Robbins.
- * Fri, Dec 6 and Sat, Dec 7, check out our 300th Anniversary Tree at Festival of the Trees in Boyertown, see front page for details
- * Saturday, Dec 7, 2-4 pm Christmas with the Dogs, Fellowship Hall
- * Sunday, Dec 8, Hanging of the Greens in worship
- * Saturday, Dec 14, 9:30-11:30, Caroling at Freeds. Bring or buy a can of food for Multi-Service.
- * Tuesday, Dec 17, noon—2 pm Christmas Cheer, see page 11 for details
- * Dec 22 – Our Children and Youth present a Christmas drama in worship
- * Dec 24 – Christmas Eve Services include a drama, "Refuge," as told by the donkey carrying Mary (3pm) and a Traditional service of lessons and carols (7 pm). Both services offer Communion.

EPIPHANY SEASON WORSHIP

- * Sunday, Jan 5 – Celebration of the Day of Epiphany (Jan 6).
- * Sunday, Jan 12 – Baptism of Christ - In our liturgy we will remember our baptism, and we install new members of Consistory and other committees on this day.

***The Church Office will be closed the week of Christmas through January 1. Sharon and Rev. Frances will be in on Thursday Jan 2. ***



Christmas with the Dogs
Saturday, December 7th
2—4 PM
Falkner Swamp UCC

Come enjoy some cookies
and a sing along with the
Dogs! Able to contribute
some cookies? See the
sign up sheet on the
bulletin board.



- ◆ Thank you to all that contributed to the Thanksgiving baskets, we delivered 10 complete meals to Multi-Service
- ◆ Breakfast @ Sunflower Café on Tuesday, December 3rd @ 9 AM
- ◆ 2020 calendars available on the table outside of Fellowship Hall
- ◆ No meeting in January

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE AT FALKNER SWAMP

Save the date: Saturday, January 4, 2020, is the next Red Cross Blood Drive scheduled here at Falkner Swamp UCC. The hours will be 9:00 – 2:00.



You can sign up to donate blood or platelets at this drive online at redcrossblood.org, or talk to Karen Miller and she'll get you on the schedule. You can make a difference and save lives!!



Christmas Caroling - Saturday Dec 14, 2019 from 9:30AM to 11:30AM. Freed's Market. All are welcome to join our Falkner Swamp choir in singing Christmas carols at Freed's Market. Please dress warm, because we are outside and it tends to be cold and breezy.



Joy to the World!

We will also be collecting food items for Boyertown Multi-Service as we did last year. We usually give folks going into the market a list of items that multi-service needs and ask them to buy an item to drop with us on their way out. Last year we filled Becky Comer's car. It was amazing what folks were willing to buy and donate! I think we cleared Freed's canned vegetable isle!!!

Please come out and join us - the more, the merrier ... and it helps put everyone in a Christmas mood!

“Share the Love, Show the Love”

So Christmas will soon be upon us; the “Most Wonderful Time of the Year”. But what about after Christmas? When it’s cold outside, and snowy and rainy, and gray? And maybe the family has gone back to their routines, either here at home or far, far away? And you’re maybe feeling as gray as the weather outside?

Well, maybe your church family has the answer!!

We have a project we are calling “Share the Love, Show the Love” that may be just what you need to get you out of those mid-winter blues! Here’s how it works:

You get a lunch-sized paper bag. Bring it to church with you on January 5 or January 12, 2020. Or use one of the bags we already have at church. After our church service on January 12 we will all get together in the fellowship room and decorate our bags. First, put your name on the bag (really important!). Then you can decorate it with whatever we have at church, or whatever you bring in from home. And feel free to trade your materials and ideas with other people. Or just leave it alone; a paper bag with just your name on it. This is NOT a contest!

When you are finished with your bag, then leave it in the fellowship room. Your work is now finished, pretty much.

Then, over the next 4 weeks, as you are so moved, write a little “Love note” to put in somebody else’s bag. Something kind. A thank you. A congratulation on a job well done. An “I appreciate you”. No limit, either to the number of notes you write, the number of people you write them to, or how long or short the notes are.

Finally, on February 16, take your bag home. And at your leisure, when the day has you down or frazzled, or you just don’t feel appreciated, open the bag and read a note. Or 2. Or as many as you’d like! Here’s what you’re going to find:

- 1) A lot of people in our church community truly, genuinely care about you. It’s a nice thing to know on a cold day in February!**
- 2) You will feel good about writing a note, telling other people how much they mean to you!**

So, there’s an idea for making those cold winter days and nights a little less gray and a little more fun. It’s a win / win!

SHARE THE LOVE, SHOW THE LOVE!



Remembering the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2020 | 3:30 P.M.

The Hill School, Alumni Chapel
860 Beech Street, Pottstown, PA 19464

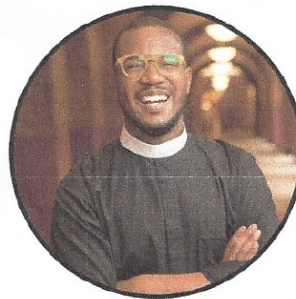
Business, political, religious, educational,
and community leaders, as well as students
and youth are encouraged to attend.
Refreshments will immediately
follow the celebration.

Sponsored by Pottstown Religious Communities



“Religious freedom is a principle
based not on shared ancestry,
culture, ethnicity, or faith but on
a shared commitment to liberty
– and it lies at the very heart of
who we are as Americans.”

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Guest Preacher

Rev. Brandon C. Harris, M.Div
Protestant Chaplain at
Georgetown University

FALKNER SWAMP UCC'S 300TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

HONOR THE PAST, CELEBRATE THE PRESENT, EMBRACE THE FUTURE

The 300th Anniversary Committee continues to plan lots of exciting events!

We are sponsoring/decorating a Christmas tree for Boyertown Multi-Service's Festival of Trees. The proceeds of this event go entirely to the Multi-Service to help them provide for local families in need. Festival visitors can enter a raffle to win their favorite tree. We are hoping that the congregation can help us out a little by donating some \$5 gift cards for us to hang on the tree to entice people to vote for our tree. If you would like to donate, please give your gift card donation to Laura Brown. We are scheduled to decorate the tree on Thursday, December 5. The Festival is Friday, December 6, from 3:00 – 9:00 p.m. and Saturday, December 7, from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Please come out to see our tree and to support this amazing organization that does so much for our community.

Please see Deb Gruver if you would like to purchase an anniversary tote bag (\$10 each). We are also selling Wawa shorti coupons (\$4 each—a bargain!).

SAVE THE DATE(S):

- June 13, 2020 – Church Picnic
- October 17 - 18, 2020 – 300th Anniversary celebration

We have also scheduled a Flapjack Fundraiser at Applebee's in Pottstown on Saturday, March 21. We'll let you know when we have the tickets available for purchase. This is an all-you-can-eat pancakes and sausage breakfast. We will be looking for volunteers for the following jobs: greeters, seaters, pancake servers, beverage servers, and bussers. Please see Karen Miller if you would like to help us out at this event.

God is good!

Committee Members: Robin Zerr, Chair; Laura Brown; Rev. Frances Chester; Sue Dickey; Barb Geary; Debbie Gruver; Wayne Gruver; Donna Hoffman; Susan Mercer; Karen Miller; Kim Shaak; Arlene Umstead.

Falkner Swamp U. C. C.
2077 Swamp Pike
Gilbertsville, PA 19525

Phone: 610-323-4053
E-mail: falknerswamp@comcast.net
Website: www.falknerswamp.org
Facebook: @falknerswampucc

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Christmas Eve
- Dec/Jan Birthdays
- Peanut Butter Eggs
- Christmas Cheer
- Christmas with the Dogs
- January Blood Drive
- MLK Service

Falkner Swamp's mission is to be a place of Welcome to All of God's children. To be a place of spiritual retreat for all who seek to know the loving Still Speaking God using the scriptures found in the Holy Bible, the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and utilizing modern interpretations and resources to make the word alive and well in the age we are in.