

NEWSLETTER

FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF FALKNER SWAMP UCC



See inside for:

- *New members joining*
- *Local ministry opportunities*
- *Blue Christmas service @ Trinity Evangelical Church*
- *Tim Tebow Mission Possible book study*
- *Red Pail collection for food ministry*

Mission Statement of Falkner Swamp United Church of Christ

(from the Constitution and By-Laws, adopted at Congregational meeting 11/13/22)

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 peaceful spiritual retreat for all 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.*

Dear Falkner Swamp “angels”:

Angels Among Us is our Advent focus. In our book study, Susan Robb’s *The Angels of Christmas*, and in worship, we look at messages from angels regarding the birth of Jesus.

We’re invited to wonder, first, how we might respond if we were in a similar circumstance. We are asked to believe and open our eyes to see that angels of Christmas still bring “good news of great joy for all the people” – for you & me. When we hear such news the question for us today is, how will we respond?

The awkward truth of Advent is that it is still a season set apart to wait, to prepare *for the second coming of Jesus*, not his first as a baby born in a manger.

We’d prefer to feature the baby’s birth, of course. Ask the many grandparents in our midst – some being welcomed into that club for the first time in recent months – how wonderful it is to hold a newborn again! A baby over Jesus’ Second Coming? It’s not even a contest.

At the start of Advent our lectionary readings bring us Jesus’ words, jarring to our modern minds: “Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.” (Matt 24:44) Anthony B. Robinson asks, “Can we really believe in a Second Coming? What does it mean if we do?” He helps us with our incomprehension:

Jesus is saying “two things. One, there will be an ending to life as we know it.... For Christians history is not an eternally repeating cycle. There is a beginning in God, and an ending in God. I am, said Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. ...Second, no one knows — or can know — when that will be. Life is uncertain. There’s a randomness to it. A flood, a break-in are other images Jesus uses to suggest life’s uncertainty, and to break through our natural and normal human tendency to assume we are somehow exempt from life’s crises and contingencies. It’s not exactly cheery stuff, but maybe the point is the same as in a verse from Psalm 90, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Robinson leads us to the mercy & grace of God. He asks:

“What would it mean to live prepared for (God’s gracious mercy) as the true end of things? By “end” as I use it there I don’t mean in a chronological sense, but “end” as in the purpose of all things? We ask for signs. Here’s one. One of the delights ... are late in life marriages. After loss, finding — being found by — love, again and anew. What grace! Or perhaps it was the grace of experiencing God’s one-way love mediated through another human being at a time when you had really messed up, when you had done something that makes you shudder now to think of it . . . and yet that person did not condemn you or abandon you, but loved you and stood by you. Can you think of a time in your life when you experienced grace? “

Recall the words of benediction I often offer at the end of our worship? “Go with the love of God, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and the power of the Holy Spirit.” Gospel readiness, which is where the angels’ messages point us to in Advent, asks for our response to both receive and offer up the grace that is the character of God. It shows up as forgiveness, compassion, and love.

We are called to be walking “grace” magnets – rippling from one end to the other, receiving the gift of grace in the process. Robinson concludes, “Here’s the meaning of the Second Coming, we can know the future now We make ready by living today the light of God’s promised future.”* Welcome to Advent.

With you on the journey,
Rev. Frances

*For the full article, read his blog here:

<https://www.anthonbrobinson.com/first-sunday-of-advent-from-san-miguel/>

Consistory News

- ❖ Matt Brown has resigned as President of Consistory. Matt provided keen insight and thoughtful leadership to the Falkner Swamp faith community and will be sorely missed. During his time as President of Consistory, Matt oversaw challenges presented by the continuing covid-19 pandemic, the replacement of the heating system, and the emergency stabilization of the steeple, just to name a few. We are grateful for Matt's efforts and guidance in service of the church and wish him all the best!
- ❖ Karen Miller was elected Acting President and Kim Shaak was elected Acting Vice President. They will serve these offices for the remainder of 2022; elections will be held in January for the 2023 officers.
- ❖ In review of the budget this past month, the Consistory has decided to close the Heater fund, Sponsor a Family, and Youth Room funds. Since these funds will be closed, we will no longer need donations that are earmarked for these projects. The Heater project and the Youth Room project have both been completed. Sponsor a Family was a program run by Boyertown Area Multi-Service and was completed last year. Thank you all for your support of these programs, without your generous donations and support these projects and programs wouldn't be possible. There are small balances in these restricted funds, the church office contacted the donors who make up the balance and received permission to move these balances into the Beautification Fund. The goal of the Beautification Fund is to “beautify” the church after the heating system is complete. Thank you again for making it possible to complete these three projects and any future donations can be earmarked for the Beautification fund.



Fred and Rene Laquinta have attended Falkner Swamp off and on the past year and have decided to make it their new church home. We welcome them in membership in our worship on Dec 11. Welcome, Fred & Rene! Read below for more about them:

Fred and Rene recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Originally from Pittsburgh, over their married life they made many moves. Included among them were: Lehigh Valley, Indianapolis, Houston, West Chester PA and South Jersey. Five years ago they moved to Barto in order to be closer to their older daughter who owns a horse farm in Huff's Church. Their younger daughter lives outside Atlanta and they have a very active one year old grandson.

Fred retired as head of Human Resources for a large health system in South Jersey and had a small consulting practice coaching executives in their new roles. Rene retired from teaching having taught all grade levels in private, Catholic and public schools.

For most of their lives Fred and Rene were active members in the Catholic Church. Events in the church sent them on a faith journey and brought them to UCC and now to Falkner Swamp.



“Red Pail” Collection for the Salvation Army

Rev. Frances and Consistory recently received a request for help from The Boyertown Salvation Army. They are currently providing 650 meals per week and serving 440 community members through their weekly food pantry. They are running out of food and supplies and are asking community churches for assistance.

They are asking us to contribute \$1 per person per Sunday for the remainder of 2022. In the spirit of the Salvation Army's “red kettle” campaign each Christmas, we have a “red pail” which will be on the organ for you to drop in your donations before or after worship.

Just \$3 will cover food and containers for one person for the daily lunch. You are welcome to donate any amount you can—it can be less than \$1, or greater than \$1—when we help feed our community, every penny counts! In addition, the church will match the total gifts up to \$500! Please help us fight hunger in our community.

We want to thank everyone for the generous response on the first Sunday of Advent—we raised \$245!!

DECEMBER

				1	2	3
4 9-9:45 AM book study 10 AM Worship Communion #morepeace BAMS offering Joyful Noise 7 PM/AA Mtg.	5 7 PM Music & Worship	6 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	7 Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30 PM 7 PM Choir	8 **Rev. Frances' office hours	9	10
11 9-9:45 AM book study 10 AM/Worship #morejoy 7 PM/AA Mtg.	12	13 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	14 Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30 PM 7 PM Choir	15 **Rev. Frances' office hours	16	17
18 9-9:45 AM book study 10 AM/Worship #morelove The Dogs Plus, 2-4 PM 7 PM/AA Mtg.	19 7 PM Consistory	20 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	21 Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30 PM 7 PM Choir	22	23	24 Christmas Eve 7 PM Candle-lighting & Communion 50/50 - Bethany & Christmas Fund Offering
25 No in-person worship – recorded video #morehospitality 7 PM/AA Mtg.	26 Church	27 Office	28 Closed	29 this	30 week	31

** Times vary, please call or text for an appointment: 484-995-2705



*Prayer requests will be kept on the prayer list for 3 weeks.
Please contact Rev. Frances if the prayer request should be extended.*

~Congratulation to Patrick Brennan and fiancé Maddy Ward, who gave birth to daughter Harper Mae on Nov. 12; she was 6 lbs 14 oz and 20 in long. Congratulation to grandparents Kevin & Stacey Brennan also!

~Bob Bridegam, for doctor's wisdom as they try to find a solution for some recent vision issues

~Betsy Basile, for upcoming medical tests and ongoing health concerns

Scriptures for Sundays in Advent and Christmas:

During Advent we take a break from the lectionary cycle of readings. This Advent we listen to the messages the angels bring, which ask for our response.

If you'd like to have both sets of readings, the lectionary readings for Advent Year A are highlighted.

Nov 27; Luke 1:5-25, 57-80 (Angel appears to Zechariah)

Isaiah 2:1-5 • Psalm 122 • Romans 13:11-14 • Matthew 24:36-44

Dec 4: Luke 26-56 (Angel appears to Mary)

Isaiah 11:1-10 • Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 • Romans 15:4-13 • Matthew 3:1-12

Dec 11: Matt: 1:18-25 (Angel appears to Joseph)

Isaiah 35:1-10 • Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55 • James 5:7-10 • Matthew 11:2-11

Dec 18: Luke 2:1-20 (Angels appear to shepherds)

Isaiah 7:10-16 • Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 • Romans 1:1-7 • Matthew 1:18-25

Christmas Day: Gen 18: 1-15 (Angels appear to Abraham & Sarah)

Isaiah 9:2-7 • Psalm 96 • Titus 2:11-14 • Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Jan 1: Matt 2: 1-23 (Angel appears again to Joseph)

Isaiah 63:7-9 • Psalm 148 • Hebrews 2:10-18 • Matthew 2:13-23

LOCAL MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Helping Our Unhoused Neighbors

1. **Needed: a person from our congregation to attend monthly Zoom meetings for the Boyertown Homeless Task Force to help fulfill its mission that homelessness is a RARE, BRIEF AND NON-RECURRING EXPERIENCE.** Ken Hunt, head of the Boyertown United Way, began these meetings last year after people without homes sought help from him, Boyertown Area Multi-Service, and the Salvation Army. The meetings include representatives from these organizations and others, such as local police, our church, Church of the Good Shepherd, Shepherd of the Hills, St. Luke's Lutheran, and others. Most of these are lay people seeking ways to further the mission.

One of the churches is beginning a mentorship team— people who simply walk alongside an unhoused person as they work with other agencies who are helping them, to encourage them. This is one area of growth that has come out of these meetings.

Can you be that person to attend on behalf of Falkner Swamp, and help our church continue its mission as set forth in our newly voted on Constitution & By-Laws (see front page)?

Please talk with Rev. Frances if this is speaking to your heart and calendar!

2. Pottstown Beacon of Hope, Warming Center held at St. Paul's UCC in Pottstown

With the opening of the Warming Center on November 1 just around the corner, we are ready to begin signing up volunteers. Before you sign-up, we ask that you watch this brief video/slideshow about volunteering at the Center: <https://pottstownbeaconofhope.org/volunteer> (copy and paste in new browser). Next, we ask you consider signing up for:

- [Morning Volunteer 6:30 - 8:30 am](#)
- [Evening Volunteer 6:00 - 8:00 pm](#)
- [Morning Driver 7 - 8:30 am](#)
- [Afternoon Driver 6:30 - 7:30 pm](#)

Teens are welcome to volunteer at the Center, but they must be accompanied by an adult.

For those of you interested, we have updated our [Amazon Smile Wish List](#).

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/35OI96ZVUNTKV?ref=wl_share&fbclid=IwAR151kb4EQPcqLzom4-7qzSGVaGwyJzNqc3uuTTr1RNUn3wvu9g97ZxNLRQ. This is another great way to help if you are not able to volunteer your time.

A Dinner Ministry – First Presbyterian Church in Pottstown

- Falkner Swamp will cook and serve a meal on the following dates in 2023:

Jan 19, March 16, May 18, July 20 and Sept 21
(Third Thursday, every other month)

- Stacey Brennan coordinates this ministry; listen for her announcements and watch for the donation box for needed supplies
- Let her know if you can join any one of the meals.



Thank you to our Cleaning Crew this month! They keep all our church spaces sparkling & fresh.

For November, Susan Mercer recruited help from Olga Rees, Joanne Lewis, and Ken Sell. Thank you for hearing the call. For December, we thank Carol Stevens and Linda Sell.

Always room to add more cleaners and cleaning teams! Contact church office if you have some time & can help out: 610-323-4053 or falknerswamp@comcast.net



We want to do more than just exist. We want our lives to count. We want to believe that there's more to our time on earth than just feeling pleasure, pursuing goals, and gaining social status.

Deep inside, we know the truth: our life's mission is to live with purpose. For followers of Christ, living out that mission is possible because of what God has done for us through Jesus. We just need to know the steps to make it happen.

In his book *Mission Possible*, Tim Tebow introduces the tools you need to set your priorities and align your choices with God's call on your life. Now, in the insightful and practical *Mission Possible Bible Study*, he provides a clear plan for applying those principles and lessons—whether you're just getting started or want to take your mission to the next level.

- Learn how to fix your focus with an eternal perspective.
- Be newly motivated by some of the Bible's most inspiring passages.
- Engage in personal reflection.
- Complete practical mission exercises.
- Pray heartfelt prayers.

The Bible is your mission playbook. And bestselling author, inspirational speaker, and professional athlete Tim Tebow will show you how it can help you find your unique, God-given sense of mission so that you can live out the life of purpose you desire.

Join Rev. Frances on Tuesday afternoons:

January 10-17-24-31 & February 7 & 14 from 1 pm to 2:15 pm

Join Brenda Semach on Thursday evenings:

January 12-19-26 & February 2-9-16 from 7pm to 8:15pm

Let's find out what our mission is together!

There is a signup sheet in Fellowship Hall. Please sign up so we know how many books we need.



You're Invited to...

*A Service of
Remembrance, Healing, and Hope*

*A special time to gather and remember loved ones, find comfort
in healing, and find hope in God's Word for tomorrow.*

December 11, 2022

2:00 p.m.

Livestream available at trinityboyertown.org

Message will be presented by Pastor Les Cool

Candle Lighting in Memory of Loved Ones.

Light refreshments to follow service.

Held at:

**Trinity Church
250 Sweinhart Road
Boyertown, PA 19525
610-369-1507**



Fastnacht Social – Friday, February 24, 2023

7PM

Old Favorites

Soon to become Favorites

Lots of Laughs

Donuts & Light Refreshments

The Dogs Plus
Christmas Music Plus
Cookies & Light Refreshments Plus



Please join us at FALKNER SWAMP UCC in the Fellowship Room on:

Sunday, December 18, 2022

2 PM to 4 PM

Music, fellowship, fun, laughter ... Let's get in the Christmas Spirit together!

Old, Young, or in between ... or maybe not admitting to any age ...

Please Come Out and Join Us!

Be An Angel Advent Calendar

1. Draw a picture for someone. Make it colorful and happy	2. Make someone laugh- tell a joke or make a funny face or just start laughing	3. Leave a small surprise gift for someone...don't sign your name!	4. Do someone else's chore as a surprise	5. Give someone a compliment (something that is nice about them)
6. Mail a handmade Christmas card to someone	7. Donate a new toy to charity	8. Give someone a 10-second hug, just because...	9. Look at yourself in a mirror. Tell yourself 5 things you like about you	10. Help out by dusting the baseboards in one room
11. Help clean up after dinner- carry plates to the sink or dishwasher	12. Donate a food item to the church's Pantry Box	13. Hold the door open for someone behind you	14. Sing <u>The First Noel</u> , alone or with the family. Find it on YouTube...	15. Donate a blanket or some old towels to an animal shelter
16. Choose a Christmas movie and watch it with the family	17. Make paper snowflakes and decorate a window or door	18. With sidewalk chalk, write a Christmas message on your sidewalk	19. Help bake some cookies	20. Share those cookies with friends and neighbors
21. Sing <u>Away in a Manger</u> alone or with the family. Find it on YouTube	22. Write 5 things you like about one of your friends. Then tell them.	23. Give a smile to 5 different people in one day	24. Memorize: I bring to you good tidings. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a	25. Pray to God: "Thank you for sending us your Son, Jesus." MERRY CHRISTMAS

Advent Prayers

from Advent with the Angels: a daily devotional for kids by Jared Dees

1. Dear Father, thank you for always hearing my prayers. Talking to You always helps.	2. Lord, thank you for all the gifts and blessings You have given me in my life.	3. Father, remind me to always try my best to be great in Your eyes.	4. Jesus, Help me to resist temptation. Help me to make good choices.	5. Blessed Lord, continue to fill my heart with hope, peace, joy, and love.
6. God, thank you for putting people in my life that help me turn to You.	7. Father, Thank you for giving me family and friends who love me.	8. Lord, help me to be bold and stand up for You.	9. Lord, thank you for letting me feel You are with me at church, at home, or out walking in nature.	10. Jesus, help me to share the good news about your birth. It truly is The Reason for the Season.
11. Lord, help me to listen for your help, especially when I have doubts.	12. Dear God, thank you for saying, "I am with you". I feel your protective arms around me.	13. Lord, thank you for the many blessings You have given me.	14. Lord, thank you for giving me comfort when I am afraid.	15. Father, even though I am not perfect, You love me for who I am. Thank you.
16. Your name, Jesus, means "God Saves". Thank you for saving me.	17. Lord, You are my king and my God. I will follow You.	18. Lord, thank you for taking care of me. I will be careful with the things and the people in my life.	19. Lord, thank you for your Holy Spirit that you send to help me and guide me in doing the right thing.	20. Father, thank you for giving me peace when I need it most. It's like sitting in the cool shade of Your Love.
21. God, I know that like Jesus, I too am holy simply because I am loved by You. Thank you.	22. Lord, the angel, Gabriel said, "For nothing will be impossible with God." I put all my faith in You..	23. Lord, may I always remember to give you glory, just as the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest heaven!"	24. Father, thank you for all the great gifts during Christmas time. You are the best gift of all.	25. Dear Father, thank you for sending your son, Jesus to us. MERRY CHRISTMAS