

# NEWSLETTER

FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF FALKNER SWAMP UCC



Dear Falkner Swamp Friends,

Words matter.

My carpool partner and I had to agree on what we mean when planning recently who was driving our kids to and from camp. “Drop off” means the morning run. “Pick up” means the afternoon run. It could go the other way, though. I could “pick up” her kids in the morning and “drop off” her kids on the way home in the afternoon.

Our lack of clarity could lead to some stranded kids!

Words matter. In recent years words such as gender dysphoria and transgender have entered our language. *Gender dysphoria* is a clinical term often used to describe those who struggle with the sex they were assigned at birth. *Transgender* refers to those who identify with a gender that is different than what they were assigned at birth. Not all who are transgender experience gender dysphoria.

One of the challenges a transgender person faces is being called by the pronoun they identify with. For instance, a “he” now identifies as “she.”

The Trevor Project, an organization focused on suicide prevention efforts among LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) youth, conducted a national survey in 2020. One discovery was that “transgender youth who reported having pronouns respected by all or most people in their lives attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected.”

The same survey reported that “40% of LGBTQ respondents seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months, *with more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth having seriously considered suicide*” (my italics). In the survey, over 40,000 LGBTQ youth responded, ages 13-24, from Dec 2019-March 2020. Go here to see more:

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2020/?section=Introduction>

Words matter. If respecting someone’s pronoun leads to helping them live life rather than add to contemplation of death, it is well worth the work on our part to attempt understanding. It is well worth the welcome of the church to all youth, for how they desire to be named and called, so that no kids are stranded.

With you on the journey,  
Rev. Frances



				1 Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30  Choir 7 PM	2	3
4  10 AM/Worship w/Communion  7 PM/AA Mtg.	5  Music & Worship 7 PM	6	7  Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30	8  Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30  Labyrinth Walk 6:30 PM  Choir 7 PM	9	10
11  10 AM/Worship 11 AM/ Congregational Conversation  7 PM/AA Mtg.	12	13	14  Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30	15  Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30  Choir 7 PM	16	17
<b>*General Synod</b>						
18  10 AM/Worship Rev. Deb Timmins, preaching  7 PM/AA Mtg.	19  COM mtg. 1 – 3:30 PM  Consistory 7 PM	20  Faith Formation Work Party 5:30 – 8:30 PM	21  Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30	22  Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30  Choir 7 PM	23	24
25  10 AM/Worship  7 PM/AA Mtg.	26	27	28  Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30  Green Lane Walk 6 PM	29  Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30	30	31

\*General Synod ~ Rev. Frances will be a delegate representing the PSEC at the first ever virtual General Synod, a biannual conference of the national churches of the UCC. It begins Sun. July 11 at 5 pm with Opening Worship. Mon-Thurs are evening sessions, Fri/Sat are all day, Sun July 18 is 1-8pm.

**Save these dates! Congregational Conversations July 11 and Aug 1**

Consistory would like to host 2 more conversations this summer following worship. Topics TBA but please plan to be part of them and reconnect with your church family.

## From Laura Brown, lay delegate to the Spring PSEC Meeting, Fri, June 4 & Sat. Jun 5:

Hello Falkner Swamp,

Rev. Frances, Stacey Brennan, and I attended the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ's Annual Meeting entitled, "Deepening Our Journey, Deepening Our Connection."

A virtual meeting, I signed-off yesterday inspired by others in our conference, and eager to share the discussions had with you- my faith community.

On Friday:

- We had the privilege of hearing from Sister Simone Campbell, a Catholic nun whose ministry is grounded in justice work and bridges divides through listening with a "holy curiosity," a contemplative stance of prayer and keeping an open heart. Those in attendance were able to practice these listening skills, and 'holy curiosity' in small discussion groups.
- Virtual Meetups - I attended two. Education for Lay Leaders, and The PSEC Stained Glass Window project, a discussion about the stained glass windows of the churches of PSEC. Our beautiful windows at Falkner Swamp were featured.
- Closing Worship - Falkner Swamp was celebrated on our 300th anniversary, along with other churches who celebrated milestone anniversaries in 2020/21.

On Saturday:

- Opening worship, and business sessions, where numerous reports were presented and approved, and clergy, lay delegates, and leadership were surveyed about their church's experience during the Covid19 Pandemic.
- Workshops. Stacey, Rev. Frances and I attended Stepping into the Church of the Future, which was an invigorating look at refocusing our faith community in mission, by reorienting and focusing on what we value, and leaning into our incarnational faith and seeing a future full of possibility.
- Anniversary Pastors, Honoring Pastors who have died, and Closing Worship.

Where I found gratitude and joy:

- People shared stories of being able to worship together online with friends and family that live near and far, and being able to invite loved ones that live great distances away, to worship at their own church.
- I especially found joy in other's stories as I know that sometimes Matt's Grandmom Joy logs into our livestream, after she worships with her own congregation, Matt's parent's church, and his Aunt's church. I loved hearing about the blessings received from those that have been able to share these connections, which would have been impossible prior to this time.

~continued

- I was grateful during this past weekend to have the opportunity to reflect on what being a member of the United Church of Christ has meant to me and my faith journey, whether it was honoring the life of Rev. Donald Moyer, who baptized me; celebrating the 25th ordination anniversary of the Rev. Karen Nuscher-Creasy who started her called pastoral ministry while also working as a nurse at Pottstown Hospital, and sat with me in the ER on a very difficult night when I was a scared 17 year old; seeing the smiling face of Rev. Mary Etta Mest, who has been a gift to this congregation, and has sat and prayed with me post-surgery, and when visiting my beloved Grandparents.
- I was able to see the many joy-filled faces of those that I have gotten to know from my classes in the PAM program at LTS, and my work with the PSEC Climate Justice Committee, and most importantly being present with Rev. Frances and Stacey, who inspire me with their love for God and others, and this congregation, every day.

This weekend offered me a visual timeline of my faith walk in the loving faces of those that have heard the call, and answered, "here I am." I know it doesn't come to a surprise to those of you that know me that I shed a few tears of joy and thanksgiving by the time we shared communion at the end of our day. Again, many thanks to those who organized and moderated this year's annual meeting, and I hope that this report finds you all very well.

With thankfulness for our Trinitarian God, The United Church of Christ, and the people, ministry, and mission of Falkner Swamp,  
Laura Brown

## Worship Details

Music & Worship committee met on June 28, 2021 at 7:00 via Zoom. As a result of the meeting, we would like the friends and congregation of Falkner Swamp to know the update regarding mask wearing, etc. As you all know, you had the opportunity to vote on the following question:

"We are considering lifting the mask requirement during indoor church services (except for singing). Will you be comfortable attending church inside if masks are no longer required (except for singing)? \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO **If you have already voted, please don't vote again.**"

The voting resulted in the majority of folks feeling comfortable attending church inside if masks were worn while singing (vote 31 "yes" and 4 "no"). In light of the votes - starting this Sunday, July 4, 2021 - we will be requiring masks be worn when singing (so please bring along your masks). Otherwise, masks are optional. Also, the center section of the sanctuary will still have "social distancing" with ropes at every other pew. Please respect those who may still feel that they would like some social distance. The other two sections will be open...again, use your own discretion and respect of others.

We will begin singing more hymns throughout the service as of July 4, 2021 and Arlene has graciously agreed to fill in for Erica for the organ and piano music.

Thank you all for your votes and for your patience...  
Music & Worship Committee



### **Some Highlights from June's Consistory Meeting**

- Rev. Frances is a delegate for the virtual UCC General Synod meeting in July
- Benches were purchased for outside
- Karen Miller volunteered to join the Endowment Committee as they were in need of one more member
- Women's Ministries is planning Ladies Night for September 21
- Plan to hold Congregational Conversations after worship on July 11 & August 1
- An ad hoc committee was formed to care for the playground – Karen Miller, Stacey Brenna, and the Brown family
- Property received 2 bids for the heater, with a third coming in. Cost will be upward of \$100,000. After the 3 bids are received, Property will make a recommendation to Consistory and a Congregational vote will be needed.

Full, approved minutes are on the bulletin board outside the church office.

### **Faithful Giving: Falkner Swamp by the (financial) numbers:**

This financial information is for the month of May 2021.

Total general fund intake and outgoing is:

General Funds Income:	\$10,893.96
General Funds Expenses:	\$11,318.51
General Fund Loss for May:	(\$424.55)

Restricted Funds Income:	\$2,465.12
Restricted Funds Expenses:	\$687.62



For more information see Vivian's Treasurer's Report on the bulletin board outside the church office.

***We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”***

– Winston Churchill

## A Letter from our new Organist/Choir Director

*Erica began (again) with Falkner Swamp on March 1, as both Choir Director and Organist. We welcome her enthusiastically for her gifts of faith and music that she shares with us each week. Read on:*

Hello everyone! My name is Erica Creed and I am excited to be the Choir Director and Organist here at Falkner Swamp UCC!

My love of music began when I started taking piano lessons at 7 years old. I quickly learned that music was my passion. My first of what would be many church music positions was here at Falkner Swamp when I was in high school. I was the accompanist for the choir, and within a few years became the Choir Director. It was here that I learned “hands-on” what it felt like to praise God through my music and the music of others! I now hold a Bachelor of Music degree in Education from University of Delaware and a Master’s degree in Secondary Education from Kutztown University. I work for Boyertown Area School District where I am a music teacher at both of the middle schools.

I am happily married to Michael, and we are blessed with three children: Alexandra, Jonathan and Grace. We recently moved to our dream property in Barto where we have 21 acres to raise our children, rescue/adopt animals in need, and work, work, work! We have many pets: horses, a miniature donkey, goats, miniature potbellied pigs, dogs, cats, chickens and a tortoise! I never imagined we would eventually live on a farm (my dream as a child), but God keeps opening doors and leading us in the direction of His will! It’s so exciting! As a family, we enjoy working outside, gardening, horseback riding, baseball, softball, as well as music! Between our three children, they sing, play piano, viola, clarinet, bass and drums.

In the last few years, I have grown to appreciate and love playing Christian music on piano. It is my escape from the world, and I love “singing” music through the melody played by my fingers to praise our Lord. On organ, my favorite music for the church service is the music I play before the service begins. On my way to church each Sunday morning, I talk to God on my drive and ask him what music we all need to hear that day. He puts a hymn in my head, and that is where I begin my music for the morning.

I am thrilled to be back at Falkner Swamp after all of these years. I have always said that the people here are amazing, and now you have welcomed me back with open arms. Thank you, and I look forward to many years of making music together!

## Church Family News

Tim, Robbie, and Abby K, have all got wonderful news to share:

**Tim** earned his Master's of Science in Space Sciences at the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor. Technically, he earned it at the end of the Fall 2020 semester. He took and passed his "Qualifying Exam" in May, which allows him to continue on his path toward his Doctorate.

**Abby** earned a Bachelor of Science in Geoscience--Geology Concentration with minors in Physics and in Mathematics. She graduated summa cum laude (4.0) as part of the Honors College, and was selected as the College of Science and Mathematics' Outstanding Student Award. Abby is headed to California for graduate school.

**Robbie** celebrated his Eagle Scout award at a ceremony on June 2, after earning it before shut down last March, with the Board of Review in September. Of the boys who were in Robbie's Cub Scout Den and Boy Scout Patrol all the way since 1st grade, only one wasn't able to make it. Tim was in town to attend, also an Eagle Scout.

Congratulations to Tim, Abby and Robbie, who have all worked hard for their achievements!

**Shelby** with husband Trevor welcomed son Garrett Robert Gey into the world, born May 26<sup>th</sup>. **Bob and Maryann** are happy grandparents, with proud parents **Rob & Kim** and new aunt **Grace**. Congratulations, all!



*Prayer requests will be kept on the prayer list for 3 weeks.*

- Emma Jane – health issues & death of husband
- Levina R. – health concerns
- Gary, Wayne's brother – health issues
- Jeff G., brother of Cassandra K.
- Susan, Arlene's friend, for health issues related to car accident
- Erma Frye, and adult children, Ruth and Roger and daughter-in-law Patty

Please let Rev. Frances know if you'd like to be added, or if another for whom you pray has given you permission to be joined for our collective prayer. You may also email prayers to Sharon at [falknerswamp@comcast.net](mailto:falknerswamp@comcast.net).



## June 13 Congregational Conversation

Of 39 who worshipped on Sunday, 27 joined for 45 minutes of conversation around four tables. The questions focused on emerging out of pandemic:

- What has been the most challenging aspect of the pandemic?
- Where do I see hope in the midst?
- And what have I learned about myself that I want to hold onto moving forward?

Everyone was handed a brown bag of snacks. Thanks to Ron for making homemade chocolate chip cookies!

Each question was given 6 minutes for responses at individual tables. Then as a whole group, one person per table reported out one response per question. The process enabled each to speak who wished to and to listen carefully to the other. For example, when someone reported from their table, they were asked to respond with another's reply, not their own.

Karen gathered notes. The following are responses to the above 3 questions from those at her table. Underneath each question are responses from the other 3 tables. Check out the variety of replies, reflecting a wide range of experiences & hopes:



1. How has the pandemic affected you/what was most difficult?

- being alone
- not seeing family
- constantly changing guidelines

-pandemic used for political purposes

*Responses from other tables*

-leaving home for extended periods to do your job

- staying at home together
- masking
- not seeing church family

2. Where do I see hope?

- people stepping up (essential workers--docs/nurses, grocery store employees, etc.)
- more helping others and volunteering
- places re-opening
- learning we can count on family

*Responses from other tables*

- young people volunteering
- technology we needed/learned to use
- vaccinations



*Rev. Frances adds: At one table, most said they didn't see hope. When asked about this further, the reply came that over summer we may enjoy ourselves with much less threat but come the fall, cases may pick up and we would again enter a pandemic "shut-down" of sorts.*

*Later, answering Question #3 (below), one table's response included "more adaptable." The person explained that in our pandemic living, we learned how to adapt such that if we need to "go back," we now have tools and ways to cope. I hear these as opposites....not having hope....more adaptable....that reside in each of us. Some days we may feel the weight of hopelessness while on others we discover afresh our adaptability. What about you? How do you struggle with hope in this time? What is adaptable about you that wasn't a year and a half ago?*

3. What have I learned about myself that I want to hang onto?

-counting blessing more often

-it's rewarding to help others

-our own resilience

-setting and attaining goals

*Responses from other tables*

-developed more

patience and perseverance

-more adaptable

-mental health is

important

-it's okay to be alone

-it's okay to not be busy



*One participant said to me afterward, "I learned I could be alone with myself," noting how much calmer they felt in general. This is another polarity to embrace, that living shuttered away is isolating and lonely at times. And, it provides opportunity to learn how to be alone with ourselves. We discover what makes our hearts feel lighter while befriending the lurking shadows when our busy-ness falls away.*

Thanks to Consistory members who brought supplies for our snack bags and for facilitating the conversation. And thanks to those 27 of you brave hearts who were willing to sit with each other, listen, speak, and witness to the range of experience and emotion expressed. In Christ we are a family, brothers and sisters to help each other share the load, and to give and receive grace. I give thanks to our great God for carrying us, and caring for us.

## Labyrinth Walks

Join Rev. Frances and others for a walk and time in prayer – around a labyrinth at a local church. Plan to spend about 30 minutes – longer if you like. We'll start together with a brief prayer, then each walks at their own pace.

**Thursday, July 8, 6:30 pm at St. James UCC in Limerick**

St James UCC

321 S Limerick Rd, Royersford, PA 19468



### **What is a Labyrinth?**

A labyrinth is a circular path created for prayer and meditation. It is not a maze where you have to figure out where to go. There is one way in, and one way out.

The great cathedrals of France, such as Chartres, have a labyrinth embedded in their floors. The labyrinth was used, and is being discovered anew in the US, as a way to deepen prayer. Some come with a problem and pray for resolution, others seek to be present with God, some pray for themselves, their loved ones, their community, and the world.

*Above, Rev. Frances found a labyrinth at Sanibel Congregational UCC, when she was on vacation in May.*



We found so much joy during our Crop Walk team walks, that we've decided why not continue to meet for fresh air and fellowship throughout the year? Put on some comfortable walking shoes and join us for a walk. All are welcome! Invite a friend or neighbor! If you have any questions reach out to Laura Brown.

[laurakline-brown@hotmail.com](mailto:laurakline-brown@hotmail.com)

610-657-5266

Wednesday, July 28-6pm Green Lane Park, 2150 Green Lane Road, Green Lane, PA 18054

Thursday, August 26-6pm Swamp Creek Park-3179 Reifsnyder Road, Gilbertsville, PA 19525