

# NEWSLETTER

FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF FALKNER SWAMP UCC



Dear Falkner Swamp Friends,

Is Falkner Swamp part of your “Square Squad”?

In this pandemic we’ve had time to reflect on what truly is important to us. I am a firm believer that God doesn’t send calamity in order for us to “shape up.” I do believe the Holy One is in the vicinity at all times, however, and in the face of chaos we can choose the movement of the Spirit, the still, small voice within, and the Way of Jesus to abide more faith - fully in God.

As we move out of our year+ pandemic hibernation, we have a choice to be thoughtful. What new habits will we keep? What are we eager to take up again?



Consider this exercise from social researcher Brene Brown’s Daring Greatly. Cut out a 1 by 1 inch square of paper. On one side make a list of people whose opinions matter to you – those people who love you, not in spite of, but **because** of your vulnerabilities and imperfections. Brown says, “If you need more paper, you need to edit.”

I’m adapting the exercise to suggest that on the flip side of that 1 x 1 inch square, you write down any organizations that fit a similar profile. What places give you the gift of loving you as you are and to what you desire to have a sense of belonging? Who and what makes up your “Square Squad?”

Offer a prayer of gratitude for those people and spaces that enable you to be as you are all the while calling forth greater love. Consider how you might express your care for “those on your square.”

With you on the journey,

Rev. Frances

# June

		<b>1</b> Women's Ministries Luncheon @ Vincenzo's 12 PM	<b>2</b> Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30	<b>3</b> Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30	<b>4</b> PSEC Spring Conference	<b>5</b> Work Day 8:30 AM - ?
<b>6</b> 10 AM/Worship 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>7</b> Music & Worship 7 PM	<b>8</b> Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> 10 AM/Worship 11 AM Congregational Conversation 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> 10 AM/Worship 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>21</b> Consistory 7 PM	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30	<b>24</b> Rev Frances' office hours 9:30-4:30	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> 10 AM/Worship 7 PM/AA Mtg.	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Sharon's office hours 9:30 – 1:30			



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

- Wayne G., pacemaker surgery on May 28

## **Worship Plans, from Music & Worship meeting, Mon May 17:**

- 1) For our next 2 services, May 23 and May 30, we will be in the sanctuary\* with the following restrictions:
  - a) No singing.
  - b) Masks will be required.
  - c) Social distancing will be observed.
- \*\*2) For June 6 and June 13 we will remain inside, with a slightly different set of restrictions:
  - a) Masks will still be required.
  - b) Social distancing will still be practiced.
  - c) We WILL be singing at the end of the service, with masks. We will stand while Erica plays the hymn one time thru without singing, to allow those who are uncomfortable with singing to leave the sanctuary. They can then meet downstairs to listen to the end of the service, or go outside. All the singing will be at the end of the service; 1 hymn, a Choral Anthem, and a Choral Benediction. We will be asked to leave the service IMMEDIATELY at the end of the Benediction and congregate outside for socialization.
- \*\*3) After June 13, our TENTATIVE plan is:
  - a) Social distancing will still be encouraged.
  - b) Masks will be worn whenever there is singing, but will not be required while sitting quietly. We will stand while Erica plays the hymn one time thru without singing, to allow those who are uncomfortable with singing to leave the sanctuary. They can then meet downstairs to listen to the end of the service, or go outside.
  - c) We will continue to sing only towards the end of the service.

\*Worship moved indoors because arranging for outdoor requires considerable set-up and take-down. The Committee acknowledges a number of worshippers continue to prefer outdoors while others have been waiting to move indoors.

\*\*Please note that these plans will be discussed at Consistory at their meeting on May 24.



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

- Review of ministry –Lee Comer, Kim Shaak and Barb McDonough met with Rev. Frances to complete this review. Revision to sabbatical leave section of Call Agreement was approved as follows: Our church will provide you with a sabbatical leave of two months after seven years of part-time ministry with our church that began in 2015. Therefore, you are eligible for your first sabbatical in 2022. Thereafter, should your call remain part-time, sabbatical time reflects this pattern. If we call you to full-time ministry after 2022, sabbatical leave will reflect that of a full-time call, which is three months after six years of full-time ministry.
- Consistory members are willing to assist Rev. Frances with visitation now that Rev. Mest has been released from her duties.
- Replacement of roof was approved at Congregational Meeting and work is being completed this week.
- Mission statement will be shared with Committees as a reminder of standard to follow.

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

## **Covenant Association Spring Meeting – April 25, 2021**

Falkner Swamp Attendees: Rev. Frances Chester and Becky Comer

The Zoom meeting was called to order by Moderator Tom Wright. Gathering Worship was led by Janeen Adil, Commissioned Minister for Christian Spirituality. Janeen also gave a presentation on Donna Hicks's book entitled "Dignity." Donna Hicks has traveled the world talking to world leaders about conflict. In her travels she discovered that when we treat others with dignity, conflict can be minimized. One quote from her book stayed with me, "When we honor other people's dignity, we strengthen our own." We then broke into breakout rooms of 6-8 people to discuss topics Janeen had given us.

The Credentials Report reported that there were 74 people in attendance, 1 Moderator (non-voting), 46 Voting Clergy, 23 Voting Delegates and 4 Non-Voting Visitors. The Minutes from our last meeting and several committee reports, including the Treasurer's Report, were approved as written and read. Reports from Conference Representatives (Rev. Bonnie Dalious, Mr. Tim Kissling and Rev. Susan Minasian) were given. Normally Rev. Bill Worley would have been in attendance but his father recently passed away.

Rev. Deborah Clemens gave a report on the "Addiction Epidemic." She received 48 doses of Narcan and offered them to be distributed throughout our Association. She noted that pastors need to become "first responders."

Rev. Mary Etta Mest reported on the Slate of Nominees. One important opening on the Slate was that of Vice-Moderator. This position needs to be filled by a Lay Person. The Moderator and Vice Moderator are elected every two years, alternating Clergy and Lay. The Nominating Committee is hoping this position will be filled shortly. It was determined that the person filling this position can begin immediately after being selected by the Executive Committee and will be installed at our Fall Meeting. The Slate of Nominees were voted on and installed.

The meeting was adjourned by Tom Wright and the Closing Prayer was led by our incoming Moderator Rev. Selina Hamilton.

-submitted by Becky Comer, Falkner Swamp delegate to Spring Covenant Association meeting



### **Raise the (Christian Ed Building) Roof!**

Good news! On May 16 after worship, the gathered congregation with the previous online vote results voted unanimously to replace the roof on the Christian Education building! Thanks, everyone!

The church has money in its savings to cover the cost (\$23,500). The Property Committee will follow up and the work will commence shortly.

Thanks to the Committee for the quick work on securing bids, bringing the need to Consistory's attention, and for taking care of our physical space so that we can continue our church's ministries.

## Pastoral Relations Committee Update

What is it, you say? Good question! A Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) exists in churches to deliberately tend to the relationship between pastor and congregation, “so that the ministries of both pastor and congregation complement each other and further God’s grace in the world.” (From p. 13 in “A Sure Foundation: Resources for the relationship between pastors and congregations.”)

It consists of the pastor and between 3 to 7 members of the congregation. The lay members are chosen by the pastor and committee chair. They are chosen based on traits of mature faith and a desire to build and maintain relationships of trust between the committee and the pastor and between the committee and congregation.

The PRC meets periodically and as needed. For both the pastor and congregation, the PRC can be a place for the pastor to test possible goals for the congregation’s life and reflect on overall well-being in ministry, to ensure expectations for scope of work are maintained and not exceeded, and to air concerns of the pastor and/or congregation member(s).

The PRC met for the first time in over two years, on April 8. Moving forward, the committee will meet twice a year, and as needed. Any church member with a desire to meet and discuss an issue or idea is welcome to contact a member of the committee and request a meeting.

The members of PRC are:

Brenda Semach, Chair; Barb Geary and Lee Heffner.

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

This financial information is for the month of April 2021.

Total general fund intake and outgoing is:

General Funds Income:	\$9,001.11
General Funds Expenses:	\$8,641.02
General Fund Gain for April:	\$360.09

Restricted Funds Income:	\$792.75
Restricted Funds Expenses:	\$1,382.47



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

### Crop Walk Update

May 2 saw the 2021 Virtual Pottstown CROP Walk come to an end. Of the funds collected, 25% will go to the Pottstown Cluster that helps people in need and the rest to Church World Service for food programs world wide.

I'm happy to report that our Falkner Swamp team collected the second highest amount of all teams registered, \$2,241, far outpacing our \$1,500 goal. Pretty good for a first-time turnout!

From one of the Pottstown CROP Walk organizers, Rev. Carter Lester, co-pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Pottstown: "Please pass on to all at Falkner Swamp our thanks for our CROP Rookie of the Year award. What a great turnout you all had - and what a wonderful amount of money you raised."

A few from our team of 14 walkers/runners offered the following stats:

- Ellen walked 26 miles in 12 outings and collected \$600.
- Becky walked 48.5 miles; David hiked & ran 24 and together raised \$400.

From my point of view, it felt good to "come out of COVID living" and gather in a group, to walk and talk, to see each other in person. Knowing we are helping people close to home as well as contributing to the ongoing efforts to end hunger around the globe helped me live out my faith.

We don't know what next year's CROP walk will bring, but hopefully our experience this year will lead another team to form again for 2022.

Here are the pictures we took from our team's two walks together, at Boyertown Park and at Green Lane Park:





## Our Church Needs You!

As we begin returning to the building, prayerfully consider if you can assist in any of the following ways:

### **Acolytes**

(candle lighting for worship, beginning & end)

### **Lay Leaders**

(assist in worship with announcements, prayers, scripture reading)

### **Greeters and Ushers**

(Welcome, hand out bulletins, help find seats, offering, excuse from pews)

### **Cleaning Teams:**

(clean trafficked areas in church building)

### **A Special Offerings Coordinator**

(keep track of when offerings are received in worship & communicate via newsletter & announcements)

### **Livestream & Sound Technician**

(learn equipment, set up & operate for Sunday worship)

If you are new to anything no worries. Everyone involved in these roles was new at one point, too!

We are all part of the Body of Christ, and we need all parts as we move forward together.

Please email the church office: [falknerswamp@comcast.net](mailto:falknerswamp@comcast.net) and indicate where you can help. Or, cut at the line and drop in the offering basket at church. Someone will be in touch with you, and thank you!



Yes, I can help!

I am interested in \_\_\_\_\_

I can be contacted at (phone, email) \_\_\_\_\_

## Property Committee



The property committee has been discussing the playground area, because of the upkeep it requires. The reason for this discussion is that this area needs to be maintained and kept within state and federal regulations (thickness of mulch, regularly checking for safety issues, etc.) and...we need to have the weeds removed from the area more than once a year (we all know weeds are relentless!). So, we have been discussing the possible removal of the playground equipment.

We realize it is nice for the children to have an area where they can gather to play. If we find that the friends and members of the congregation prefer to keep the playground area, we will need folks who will be committed to regularly inspect and maintain the areas. This includes weeding, and adding fresh mulch - new swing seats will need to be obtained and installed - regular inspection for bee nests and any other hazard that might injure or harm any child.

If you are in favor of keeping the playground area for the children to use, please put together a committee or group who will take on the responsibility of maintaining the area on a regular basis. This would be a tremendous help to all of us and greatly appreciated. We would like to hear from you either way - in favor of removing the playground equipment; or, in favor of keeping the playground equipment with a willingness to maintain the area.

Thank you.

Property committee: Robin Zerr, Sharon Schnaars, Bob Erb, Lee Heffner, Ron Becker and Rob Krause.

News from Erma Frye:

Erma enjoys your cards & phone calls. Keep 'em coming! She has just moved from Legends Senior Living and is now at this address, so please change your directories accordingly:

Pennswood Manor  
530 Macoby St.  
Pensburg, PA 18073