



March 2020

THE VOICE

FALKNER SWAMP UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



It is that time again ~ Peanut Butter egg making is upon us! Women's Ministries will mix in the mornings. We will roll & dip from 4 PM— 8 PM (at the latest).



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.

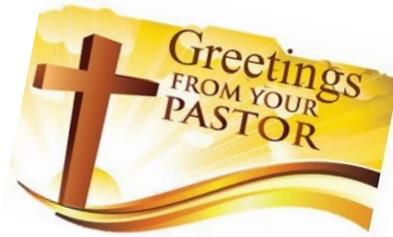


BREAKFAST FOOD COLLECTION

In honor of National Cereal Day (March 7), the Music and Worship Committee is sponsoring a collection of breakfast items for the month of March. Please bring your donations of cereal, pancake mix, syrup, oatmeal, juice, coffee, tea, and hot chocolate to church and put them in the collection box in the narthex. Help us to spread God's love by feeding our neighbors!

Dear Beloved Community,

In worship during February our scripture focus was Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Matthew Chapter 5, which begins with the Beatitudes. It can't be stressed enough that these 8 sayings from Jesus are not morals to strive for.



Jesus describes the state of being for certain people -- those who *are* meek, those who seek peace and justice for themselves and others, those who refuse to give up and so are ridiculed for their efforts. Jesus gives the Beatitudes as gifts to his listeners who are hurting.

One can read them and decide, if the kingdom of heaven lies with such people that Jesus blesses, then I would like to join them. That is a great gift the Beatitudes can give us today. What if we heard the Beatitudes as gifts to us?

Perhaps the most concrete ways these blessings speak to us is through the words, "Blessed are you who mourn, for you will be comforted." In a faith community, we take care of one another well when someone beloved has died.

We spend time remembering the gift of the loved one's life. We listen to and hold the grieving ones as they cry, supporting them through visits, meals, and silent time at their side. We check in weeks and months afterward. The faith community becomes the place of memory, too, as months turn into years, and the one who died lives on. Those who grieve know well the comfort that comes with mourning in the community of faith.

What if our faith community experienced together some of the other Beatitudes, such as being called children of God because we join together to work for peace in some conflicted arena that touches all our lives? Or what if we are filled with God's love because we find some near edge of a problem facing our society and seek, at some cost to us, better treatment of others?

This is the church Jesus blesses. May it be so.

With you on the journey,
Rev. Frances

A poem by Jim Kooser

Snowflakes fall on a sunlit morning
Wait for the day/God's breath upon me blessings all the way
Peaceful I feel in the middle years
Tired in the old
God has given me eternal life
A gift better than gold.



MARCH
BIRTHDAYS



3	Bob Erb, Jr.	20	Cameron Krause
4	Debra Gruver	21	Patt Maurer
6	Robin Zerr	22	Caleb Brown
7	Robbie Keebler	23	Patrick Brennan
16	Brenda Semach	28	Audrey Reinhart
17	Kim Erb		
17	Elizabeth Issacs		
17	Myrtle Lisko		

LENT 2020

FEBRUARY 26 – APRIL 11

At Falkner Swamp our Lenten theme is “Wilderness.”

Lent begins in the wilderness. The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness where he comes face to face with temptation and struggle. Yet, in his forty days of fasting, resisting, and wandering, Jesus is shaped and formed for his ministry. Similarly, through the wilderness of Lent, we are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. We rarely enter the wilderness willingly, but hopefully through our wandering we remember who we are and whose we are. The wilderness can become sacred even if it remains dangerous. There is no wilderness space too harsh or threatening for God’s love. This Lent, welcome to the journey.

Prayer and Study during Lent:

Lenten Devotions, Sundays 9-9:45, Conference Room. Lee Comer and Rev. Frances will take turns leading this time for reading scripture and poetry by Wendell Berry, discussion, and prayer.

Lenten Booklet from the study available for all to take home, whether you come Sunday morning or not. Each week features a Scripture, poetry reading, and meditation.

Prayer Vigil, Maundy Thursday into Good Friday, sign up for one hour.

Worship Opportunities during Lent:

Ash Wednesday, February 26. Dinner at 6:15 followed by worship at 7:15, including imposition of ashes and a simple worship service

Maundy Thursday service, April 9, 7 pm, with Holy Communion, Sanctuary

Good Friday, April 10, community services time and locations TBA

What is Lent?

Specifically Lent is 46 days. Exactly 46, every year, **starting with Ash Wednesday (Feb 26 this year) until Easter (April 12)**. “But I thought Lent was 40 days, to mirror Jesus fasting for 40 days?” you question. You’re right: those extra 6 days are Sundays and don’t count in Lent. They are “little Easters” and are a break from the somber nature of those other 40 days.

Lent is particularly Christian though the name is not: **it means “lengthen”** which is what is happening to those gray days of winter. We are moving toward more light in the physical realm. The practices of Lent offer ways for us to move toward more “light” in the spiritual sense, as Jesus Christ is called “the light of the world.”

In **the ancient church, Lent was a time for new converts to be instructed** for baptism and for believers to focus on penitence. Today, Christians see Lent as a season to be reconciled with God and one another and to prepare spiritually for the celebration of Easter.

The Christian discipline of Lent involves three aspects: **praying, fasting, and almsgiving**. All three aspects are intended to renew our relationship with God.

Many church traditions focus on the **praying** aspect of Lent, providing extra bible studies and opportunities to worship during these 6 weeks. We spend extra time and effort to make room in our hearts and lives for God as we learn God’s ways through the example of Jesus.

Fasting often focuses on giving up a food we enjoy, though we could actually choose a day to fast from everything. Maybe your observation of others or upbringing centered on giving up a favorite food for Lent: like sugar or chocolate. The practice of fasting is connected with the 40-day fast that Jesus undergoes ([Mark 1:13](#); [Matthew 4:1–11](#); [Luke 4:1–13](#)). We often hear one of these texts read in worship at the beginning of Lent. Mark tells us that Jesus was tempted by Satan, but it is in Matthew and Luke that the details of the temptation are fleshed out. All three accounts say that Jesus went without food for the 40 days.

Giving of one’s resources on behalf of another is considered **almsgiving**. Specifically it refers to donating money or goods to others, as well as other acts of charity.

Today, many churches of all stripes (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, unaffiliated Christian) take up Lenten practices to grow closer to God before the Easter celebration. It is key to note that **nothing we do will “earn” God’s love and grace for us. It has already been given.** If we approach Lent thinking we’ll save ourselves or someone we love through “giving up” something, we have a serious theological problem.

God’s grace is given unconditionally; **Lenten practices provide openings through which we more fully receive this love and allow it to change our hearts and minds.** We give up things that distract us. We focus our energy and time on prayer. We worship the source of all life, the ground of our being. In drawing close to God, we may hear the words he said to Jesus at his baptism, and by extension to us in our baptism: “You are my Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

MARCH 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Communion CWS Special Offering	2 7 PM Music & Worship	3 9 AM Women's Ministries	4 7 PM Choir	5	6	7 8—11 AM Community Breakfast
8 Lent Sundays ~ Devotional & Prayer 9—9:45AM	9	10 6:30 PM Property	11 7 PM Choir	12	13	14
15 Youth Sunday PND Meal	16	17 10—11:30 AM Bible Study	18 7 PM Choir	19 7 PM 300th Anniversary	20	21 8—10 AM Applebee's Fundraising Breakfast (tickets needed)
22 Service of the Word	23 Peanut Butter Egg Making Begins ~ see front page for details 7 PM Consistory	24 10—11:30 AM Bible Study 7 PM Faith Formation	25 7 PM Choir	26	27	28
29 Future of Falkner Swamp offering	30	31				

Sundays at Falkner Swamp:

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

March 1— Communion, Church World Service special offering

March 8 — Special choir anthem, created & led by Erin Ahart

March 15 — Youth Sunday, Joyful Noise Offering, PND Meal

March 22— Service of the Word

March 29— Future of Falkner Swamp offering

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

**FALKNER SWAMP UCC'S 300TH
ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE**

*HONOR THE PAST, CELEBRATE THE PRESENT,
EMBRACE THE FUTURE*

Save the Dates!

- ♦ **March 14—30 ~ we will be selling Falkner Swamp t-shirts again
(last time to get yours)**
- ♦ **March 21, 8—10 AM ~ Applebee's fundraising breakfast**
**Tickets needed. Please see Robin or any other committee
member. Helpers needed to serve that morning!**
- ♦ **April 4 ~ bake sale @ Freed's**
Anyone who would like to donate baked goods see Barb Geary.
- ♦ **April 23, 6—8 PM ~ Life-Changers Dinner**
**Children & youth invite someone that made a difference in their
life.**
- ♦ **June 13 (rain date June 14), 1—5 PM ~ 300th Anniversary Family
Reunion Picnic**
Invite former members and friends.
- ♦ **October 17 —18 Anniversary Celebration**
Details to come.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I read this devotion recently and wanted to share it in this article. Remember to always be kind, you never know what's happening in the other person's life.

We show forgiveness because we, too, fall short of God's ideal.

And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

– Ephesians 4:32

The Book of Ephesians describes the behavior that ought to characterize Christians as they relate to one another. Our actions ought to be permeated with kindness. Kindness is love expressed in practical ways; it is putting the needs of others before our own. It is intentionally considering ways to meet other people's needs. Being tenderhearted means that we are keenly sensitive to the feelings of others. When a fellow Christian experiences sorrow, we grieve also (1 Cor. 12:26). When another believer is joyful, we, too, rejoice. Being tenderhearted means showing compassion toward those around us.

We show forgiveness because we, too, fall short of God's ideal. Knowing that God has graciously saved us from destruction motivates us to forgive others when they offend us. Often we are less patient with our fellow Christians than we are with nonbelievers. We expect more of Christians, and we feel betrayed when they fail us. When this happens, we need to look closely at the cross and remember the forgiveness we received there. We must set aside the self-centered attitude that leads to impatience and criticism of others.

Jesus did not say that the world will know Him by our miracles, by our grand testimonies, or by our vast Bible knowledge. The world will know Him by the love that Christians show to one another (John 13:35). Ask God to give you kindness, a tender heart, and a forgiving spirit. As you allow the Spirit to build these qualities into you, your life will be a blessing to others around you.

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

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



EASTER FLOWER ORDERS

On Easter Sunday, April 12, we will be placing flowers in the chancel area of our church in honor or memory of loved ones. The flowers are being purchased from Wendy's Flowers. The order form will be available on the table in the vestibule. The deadline to order the memorial flowers this year is Sunday, March 22.



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.

Outside of Sunday

By Rev. Frances

Recently I attended two community events, both in Pottstown. One was the **Interfaith Forum** (Tues. Feb 11) hosted by State Rep. Joe Ciresi and State Sen. Bob Mensch. It included a panel of faith leaders (4 Christian, 1 Jewish), and an outreach coordinator for the PA Human Relations Commission. The forum was a good start for what I hope will lead to more gatherings to bring people face to face to problem solve and be in community with one another. It's hard to separate ourselves when we choose to come together.

The second event was **the Open House at the newly opened Ricketts Center** in Pottstown (Feb 13). The Ricketts Center is now operated by the Boyertown Area Multi-Service, who took over the lease late last year. BAMS won grants to cover the cost to renovate the building and start new programming with youth and families in the greater Pottstown area.

A tour of the Center revealed fresh paint, new ceiling tiles, a newly tiled floor to host dances, karate, and provide space for a banquet or meetings, and newly working showers, among other improvements.

After the tour I wandered in the large activities room, as children were starting to gather after school had let out. About five 10-12 year olds, boy and girls, were placing backpacks on the long table, at ease with one another. Snacks were taken out, coats haphazardly tossed on chairs. I struck up a conversation with Sydney Gajewski, the center's program coordinator.

Sydney carries a stance that is at once ready to plunge in yet yielding to read the room; it's clear she knows her charges well. One young boy, about 7 or 8, begins to come close then veers away, perhaps because he sees me and I am a stranger to him. Sydney calls out, "what, I don't get a hug?"

The boy comes closer, slowly inching forward. Sydney waits. The boy comes to her side and playfully Sydney turns her back to him. The boy grabs both her legs in a tight embrace, and Sydney turns around toward him, laughing. She reaches her arms around him with the words, "I knew you'd come! How are you (she says the boy's name)?"

The boy soon has a game out. Sydney and I continue talking, then she concludes with, "and this is what I'm here to do," and she joins the boy at the table to play.

~Continued on page 11

~continued from page 10

The Center needs willing adults to share their love of a craft, of games, of their ability to help with homework, to play basketball in the full court, and of just showing up to be there for whatever a child or teen might need.

The beauty of helping is that you choose your time and day. You can choose one day a month. Weekday or a weekend. And for those who don't drive at night? Many day time hours are available, since the Center open at 11 AM. You can come for one hour or two or four – it's up to you.

See the box below for more information about the Ricketts Center.

- ⇒ For volunteering, contact Heather Lewis by email:
hlewis@boyertownareamultiservice.org
- ⇒ Volunteer applications are available in our church, posted on the bulletin board, and on line at <http://www.boyertownareamulti-service.org/>.
- ⇒ The Ricketts Center is located at:
658 Beech Street
Pottstown, Pennsylvania 19464
(484) 524-8241
- ⇒ If you can give money or donate items, a check can be sent to BAMS or to the Center, address above. A Wish List is posted on our church bulletin board, too, if you'd like to drop off donations at the Center.



Sunday, March 15

Menu: ham, parsley potatoes, string
beans



- ◆ 15 homebound members & friends received Valentine gifts from the group in February (Matt Brown's Cub Scout Pack also made cards)
- ◆ Ladies' Night is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5th ~ look for more details soon

Cook-Off Winners



Breakfast Helpers



Love Bags



300 Acts of Random Kindness



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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE



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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.

~From "Constitution & Bylaws," September 29, 2013