



NEWSLETTER



FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF FALKNER SWAMP UCC

OUR CHURCH'S MISSION STATEMENT (adopted 11/13/2022)

as printed in the Constitution & By-laws

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 a peaceful spiritual retreat for all of 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.

See inside for:

*~Feed My Starving Children recap
~Creation Care Sunday
~New choir director
~Chester family news
~ First Nations Bible*

Dates to Remember

- ❖ The Budget Team will hold its first meeting regarding the 2027 budget on Sunday, October 11, after worship. We would like at least one person from each committee/team to attend. Please see Karen if you have any questions.
- ❖ Organ Concert, November 8 @ 3PM. Our own organist Philip Crush and Vince Ryan will provide a concert in the sanctuary. Free will offering.
- ❖ Annual Congregational Meeting following worship on Sunday, December 13

Dear Falkner Swamp Beloved,

When I occasionally run across a church newsletter from twenty years ago, or read a book preface from forty years ago, the author might reference “the times we live in” as fresh with new horrors or intractable social problems. Ecclesiastes was right: there is nothing new under the sun.

And yet under the sun in our era we still must face the challenges before us. I won’t dive into the litany – you know – they are vast. In the face of them,
I suggest that as people who follow the way of Jesus, we go back to basics.

That was the formation of my directed, silent retreat last month at the Sisters of St. Joseph retreat house in Ocean Grove, NJ last month. To sit in God’s presence. To bring my mind into my heart and rest in the heart of God.

Henri Nouwen’s 1981 book The Way of the Heart accompanied me. Nouwen, a 20th century priest known for his books and meditations on living a faithful and compassionate life, asks in the introduction: “What is required of a man or a woman who is called to enter fully into the turmoil and agony of the times and speak a word of hope?”

He turned to the Desert Mothers and Fathers of the 3rd and 4th centuries when Christianity became the chosen religion of the empire. To escape the patterning of the world, these faithful men and women found a home in the desert. Through their words, Nouwen names three things needed to know God’s will for one’s life: Find solitude, be in silence, and prayer.

On Solitude: “Solitude is not simply a means to an end. Solitude is its own end. It is the place where Christ remodels us in his own image and frees us from the victimizing compulsions of the world. Solitude is the place of our salvation.”

On Silence: “First, silence makes us pilgrims. Second, silence guards the fire within. Thirdly, silence teaches us to speak.”

On Praying: First, this is prayer of the heart, and in the Jewish-Christian tradition, the heart is “the source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional, and moral energies.” Thus, “the prayer of the heart challenges us to hide absolutely nothing from God and to surrender ourselves unconditionally to his mercy.” Three characteristics make up the prayer of the heart. It is: 1) nurtured by short, simple prayers; 2) unceasing; 3) all-inclusive.

On that third point, the prayer of the heart is all-inclusive:

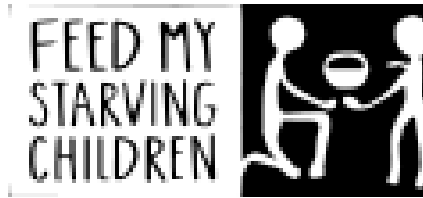
Through prayer we can carry in our heart all human pain and sorrow, all conflicts and agonies, all torture and war, all hunger, all loneliness, and misery, not because of some great psychological or emotional capacity, but because God’s heart has become one with ours.

In solitude, silence, and praying, our hearts become one with God’s. We can bravely face problems of any magnitude when we are connected to God.

Throughout the year we’ll have shared time to practice these ways of the heart. I hope you’ll join in.

With you on the journey,
Rev. Frances

PS. See my “News from the Chester family” elsewhere in the newsletter.



Recap on Feed My Starving Children MobilePack Event

This yearly event, held at Berean Bible Church, took place Sept 24-26. Groups came from all over -- area churches, school sports teams, students from Ursinus College – as well as unaffiliated individuals. Barry and I went on Saturday, and Becky Comer went with church secretary Sharon on Friday.

Our task was to fill as many “Manna packs” as our table could. Each Manna pack is filled with between 375-395 grams of dried vegetables, vitamin powder, soy, and rice, totaling 212 calories. Thirty-six packs go into one box, and boxes are loaded onto trucks for destinations world-wide. Interesting facts shared at the pack event:

- The recipient of the most packs since FMSC was formed in the 1980s is Haiti.
- 6,200 children die of starvation world-wide every day.
- It takes \$106 to feed a child for a year with Manna packs.

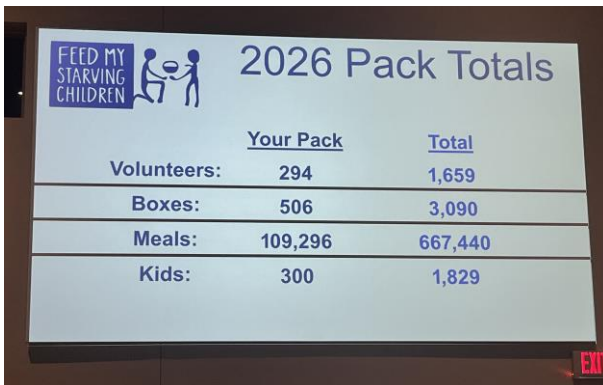
As you can see from the picture, it takes hundreds of volunteers for each 2.5 hour shift. We are all wearing hairnets, and men with beards/mustaches had nets for those, too!

The figures represent the effort of the Saturday 12-2:30 volunteers, including Barry and me. Under “Your Pack,” our group of almost 300 volunteers packed 506 boxes totaling 109,296 meals which feeds 300 kids. That made us feel pretty good!

Becky and I will promote this MobilePack event when it rolls around next year about this time. If we get a team of 8, we can be at the same table packing as many boxes as we can, cheering loud for all to hear every time a box is full.

There are sitting jobs, too, so whether you can stand or sit, there is a job for everyone! Check out more here: <https://www.fmssc.org/>.

~ Rev. Frances



	Your Pack	Total
Volunteers:	294	1,659
Boxes:	506	3,090
Meals:	109,296	667,440
Kids:	300	1,829



We Are Stewards of the Earth – Creation Care Sunday – October 4

On World Communion Sunday, Christians everywhere share this sacred meal in worship. Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox – who through the ages have argued sometimes to the death over what the bread and the cup mean – take Communion as the one body of Christ. It's a remarkable day of communion on many levels.

At Falkner Swamp we are choosing to lift up one more thing we all have in common: planet Earth. No matter where we receive Communion, the soil that grew the grapes and wheat for bread and the air and water that nurtured them, are as dependent upon us earthly caretakers in Heidelberg, Germany, as they are in Boyertown.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. – Genesis 2:15 (New Revised Standard Version)

The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. (Common English Bible)

The Hebrew words for “till” and “farm” and “keep” and “take care of” are the same words used for laboring on behalf of God (*abad*) and guarding sacred space (*shamar*).

When we care for the gift of the earth that God gave us, we participate in sacred duty.

We will explore this theme during worship on October 4, while communing together with Christian siblings across the shared earth.

Afterward, Debbie Lord and others involved in UCC Climate Hope invite you to stop by their table in Fellowship Hall.



Please stop by the Climate Hope Affiliates table display during the fellowship hour on Creation Care Sunday. Meet members of the Collegeville chapter, including our own Becky Comer and Deb Lord, along with Bev Altemose from Trinity Reformed UCC Collegeville, and Montse Nomdedeu, local educator. Learn more about Climate Hope Affiliates, a joint initiative of the United Church of Christ and [Creation Justice Ministries](#), which represents 36 different denominations.

View the winning artwork from the fourth annual Climate Hope Art Contest for Children and Youth, write a postcard to your legislators about climate concerns, ask questions, view our literature, or just stop by to chat. We look forward to seeing you!

Be informed

Keeping you in the loop



Our church has hired a new choir director! Her name is Patricia Kelley Keith, and she has 33 years experience of giving piano and voice instruction. Ms. Keith is the owner, manager and lead educator at The Music Studio of Patricia Keith and in 2015 opened a second location in Boyertown, Pennsylvania. Through her studio, she directs multiple choirs, gives group piano and voice classes, and teaches private piano and voice lessons to all ages. Patricia has three children, Mackenzie, Mason and Maddox. Her passion in life is to continue to help all people to delight in the joy of music while celebrating both the unity and diversity in each other and the world around us. We are very excited that she has agreed to come on board to help teach our choir so we can continue to provide music for worship. Patricia has many, many accomplishments and interests, so we invite you to read her bio to learn more <https://www.patriciakeith.com/patricia-keith>



Patricia will be serving our church in the same capacity as Erica Creed had done in the past. She will teach our choir the music on Wednesday nights at practice and record the song(s) on our piano for Sunday morning service. She is not able to attend our church Sunday mornings as she has another position with another church. Welcome Patricia! Our choir is looking forward to working with you!

News from the Chester Family

Occasionally one of you will ask after our children, Sam, 23, or Abby, 19. To give you an update on them, we wanted our church family to know that Sam joined the Ukrainian army in June. This was a surprise to us, and we took some time adjusting and accepting his choice. We speak with him regularly on WhatsApp, though sometimes he is out of connectivity depending on his assignment. We see that he is fulfilling a calling he feels, and for that we cannot be more proud. Prayers for his safety and health are most welcome.

Abby has begun her first year at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. She is enjoying becoming involved in a number of activities, such as joining a dance team and the mock trial team. So far she is keeping up with and enjoying her four courses.

We appreciate your care for our family.

CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

Committee Reports/Consistory Minutes

Committee reports that are received by the Church Office, and Consistory Meeting minutes that are approved by Consistory, are refreshed on the board outside the church office after each monthly Consistory meeting, typically the third Monday evening of each month, excepting one summer month.

Financial Update through August 2026

Total funds available for general use at the end of July:	\$71,458.67
Total Income received in the month of August:	+\$13,910.30
Total Expenses paid in the month of August:	(\$14,372.18)
Total funds available for general use at the end of August:	\$70,996.79

The net financial results from general church activity for the month of August reflected a loss in the general fund of \$461.88 (this amount does not include the parsonage rental income).



We gratefully receive your financial offerings for the mission and ministry of Falkner Swamp UCC through our weekly worship and via checks sent in the mail. We can also receive your financial gifts through this QR code to the left. Your donation will be processed through Vanco and is safe and secure. For all the ways you give, our church thanks you!

Prayer Requests

Let us pray for you

-our elders at home: Betsy B., Ed & Jane H., Judy & Russ M., Doris M., Joan R., Joyce R., Evelyn S., Ellie S.
-Penny H., a very good friend of Bob & Mary Ann, who faces new cancer concerns
-for the people of Nepal, continuing to search for loved ones and to heal and rebuild from the massive August flood



				1 **Rev. Frances' office hours	2	3
4 10 AM Worship w/Communion Creation Care Sunday 7 PM/AA Mtg	5 Music & Worship mtg. 7 PM	6 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 10 AM Women's Ministries 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	7 Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM	8	9	10
11 10 AM Worship Lay Leader Preaching Sunday w/Bob Schnaars Budget mtg. following worship 7 PM/AA Mtg	12	13 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	14 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	15 **Rev. Frances' office hours	16	17
18 10 AM Worship Anniversary Sunday w/Communion First Nations Bible intro following worship in Conf. Rm. 7 PM/AA Mtg	19 Consistory 6:30 PM	20 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	21 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	22 **Rev. Frances' office hours	23	24
25 10 AM Worship Apostolic Sunday, Kelly Johannsen preaching Joyful Noise Offering 7 PM/AA Mtg	26	27 Rev. Frances & Sharon's office hours 9 – 2 PM 1 – 2 PM Scripture Study 5:30 – 7 PM Girl Scouts	28 Sharon's office hours 9 - 2 PM	29 **Rev. Frances' office hours	30	31

Please send any newsletter submissions by 9 AM on the final Tuesday of each month (except December & July when they are double month editions), to the church office, falknerswamp@comcast.net.

** Times vary, please call or text for an appointment:



Thank you to our Cleaning Crews! They keep all our church spaces sparkling & fresh. For October our cleaners are Brenda Becker & Brenda Semach.

We can always use more team members, please contact the church office if you have some time and can help out: 610-323-4053 or falknerswamp@comcast.net

Creating Safer Spaces



Erin Milbourne of the Victim Services Center of Montgomery County gives a brief presentation at Falkner Swamp after worship Sept. 27.

Erin explained what the Center offers, as well as some sobering statistics. One of them is that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime.

Erin stressed that churches may be a place where people feel they can confide in someone. She said the most helpful things a person can do to support another describing a situation is to believe them and to listen without judgment. Often victims go unheard and unhelped because family and friends either don't believe them or minimize the situation.

The Center offers free counseling and the number on the screen is a 24/7 hotline for anyone. That number is 1-888-521-0983 and is now in my contacts list on my phone. Consider adding it wherever you keep your phone numbers. Erin also noted that the free counseling and hotline are available for all types of victimization, such as robbery, identity theft, and elder care abuse.

~Rev. Frances



Dear Generous and Caring Members of Falkner Swamp,

WOW – what a gift you are to the people served by Project Libertad in Phoenixville! Over the past several months you have donated gift cards totaling \$520 and a box of gently used clothing for young children. As I shared the recent donations, my contact person was overwhelmed and grateful for your generosity. She did say that the need is on-going. So, sadly, this isn't a "once and done" event. Any time you are shopping at Giant, Aldi or Walmart and decide to buy another gift card or donate children's clothing, just let me know and I will pass it on.

Thank you all for your caring and generous support of our Phoenixville neighbors
– Ann Few



The Basket Raffle is back!

The FUNdraising Team will be hosting a basket raffle this fall. We plan to display the baskets beginning Sunday, November 1, and the winners will be drawn after worship on Sunday, November 22.

Tickets will be \$1 each, or 6 tickets for \$5.

If you would like to donate a basket, please have it at church prior to November 1 so we can have the display ready to go.

Please see Patty or Karen with any questions. Thank you for your continuing support!

First Nations Version of the Bible, an Indigenous Language translation

Occasionally in worship we hear a New Testament reading from the First Nations Version. Now, a version is out for the Psalms and Proverbs.

If you've enjoyed hearing the language of the First Nations or are curious to learn more, Rev. Frances is offering a look at these unique translations. We'll read a scripture from each and compare them to common translations we read from in worship. This will take place after worship on Anniversary Sunday, Oct 18. Grab a snack and meet in the Conference Room.

