

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a bundle of golden wheat stalks. The hand is positioned in the center-left of the frame, with the fingers gently gripping the wheat. The background is a vast field of similar wheat stalks, slightly out of focus, under a clear, light blue sky. The overall tone is warm and peaceful, evoking a sense of harvest and connection to nature.

The

fall

review

**FIRST &
CALVARY**

a house of prayer for every generation

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Stretching Our Outreach Muscles

First & Calvary Family,

In this edition of *The Review* you will find encouraging stories from various aspects of our life together: from concerts to movies, from children to college students, from food to fun. All of these different stories have a common theme: outreach.

As a congregation we want to be a house of prayer for every generation; and we want to boldly pursue growth as we strive for that vision. Sometimes this means building bridges to new people who are not currently connected to First & Calvary. I have been so inspired and encouraged seeing the creative ways people are reaching out. I hope you are too.

As we stretch our outreach muscles, we are beginning to see a steady stream of first-time guests worshipping with us on Sundays. This is so encouraging! We even had 13 people show up recently to a Next Steps Dinner with Pastor Jamie and I to learn more about becoming more involved in the church and possibly becoming Covenant Partners.

I'm not sure I can convey what it feels like to stand up to preach the Word of God on a Sunday and see nonChristians listening with rapt attention right alongside Covenant Partners who've been in the congregation for decades. I'll be honest with you: This is happening every Sunday these days. I'm so humbled. That is a work of God, friends.

I'm inspired to continue to reach out even more. I am willing to go out of my comfort zone to befriend new people, to bless those in our surrounding community, and to warmly welcome people in worship who have never come before. I invite you to continue to do the same!

Thanks for inspiring me with your selflessness, your risk-taking, and your hospitality... and enjoy the following stories that describe beautiful outreach happening through this great congregation.

Rev. Don Everts



Adult Discipleship

BY REV. JAMIE SWOPE, ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP

This fall we started the school year with new discipleship opportunities for all. On Sunday mornings our classes kicked off after a summer break with wonderful options, including a class led by Pastor Don Everts entitled “Our Faith and Our Devices” hosted by the March Fellowship Class. Pastor Don wrote the lessons based on research he had recently done exploring the dangers and benefits of technology as it relates to our wellness and faith. His teaching led to many thought-provoking conversations. The McClung Class hosted a Bible study on Galatians led by Neil Stenger and based on John Stott’s book, *Reading Galatians*. The Little-Bacon Class studied the Psalms with the book *Heart to Heart with God*. Then the 49ers Class hosted a study on a video series called “Lessons from the Upper Room” by Dr. Sinclair Furguson, facilitated by Kelvin Van Osdal.

In November most of our Sunday morning groups combined for the study “Flourishing in the Third Third of Life” from Fuller Seminary, facilitated by Pastor Jamie Swope. Many people have expressed joy in combining classes, and their enthusiasm for Professor Mark Roberts’ excellent teaching on living the last third of our lives well for the Lord was well received.

Wendy Everts taught a study on the Gospel of Mark on Wednesday evenings that has been transformative for many attendees. Many themes in this gospel are helpful for new believers, those seeking the Lord, and seasoned believers. Wendy hopes to offer this study again for those unable to be part of this time.

On Sunday evenings after the Sunday Night Service, attendees have gathered at tables enjoying connection, dessert, and conversation utilizing sermon-based questions. Discussions have provided a great space for applying the message and building relationships. Because we see new guests every week at the Sunday Night Service, these conversations have also provided a space to build community.

On October 29th Pastor Don and Pastor Jamie hosted our first Next Steps Dinner for 14 attendees to learn more about our church, how to get involved, and how to become a Covenant Partner. We look forward to hosting another Next Steps opportunity soon.



2023 MSU Band Luncheon

BY ROBIN JAQUES, COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

For many years before the Covid pandemic, First & Calvary Church provided lunch to the Missouri State University Marching Band the week before the beginning of the fall semester. With classes yet to start and the MSU cafeterias yet to open, the marching band staff had come to rely on First & Calvary to help feed their 300-plus group one day during the five-day band camp.

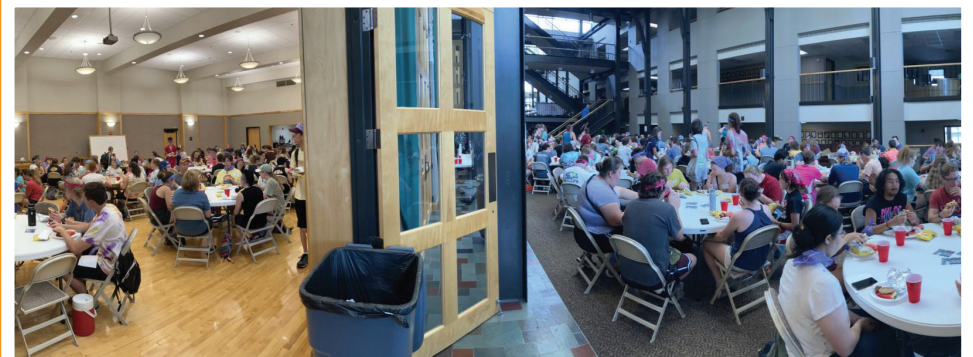


In 2020 and 2021 the program was temporarily discontinued. Still, with the removal of the COVID mandates, Missouri State University reached out to Reverend Don Everts to ask if F & C would be interested in reviving the program. The response from Don, our Campus Committee, and Minister of Outreach Wendy Everts was an emphatic “yes.”

So, on August 16, 2022, First & Calvary opened its doors to 350 students from the MSU Marching Band. Volunteers grilled hotdogs and hamburgers under the portico. At the same time, two long rows of tables in the South atrium were loaded with food to appeal to every dietary need of the students, from vegan and vegetarian offerings to peanut-free options and more than 30 dozen homemade cookies for dessert.

In 2023 the program continued with approximately 200 young guests and staff of the MSU marching band in attendance. Once again, volunteers grilled, set up and took down tables, dropped off cookies, served food, and generally welcomed the band members who have come to enjoy the hospitality of First & Calvary Church as they return to MSU after the summer break.

Each year the many enthusiastic “thanks” and notes of appreciation from MSU students and staff encourage us to continue this tradition for years to come.



Sunday Night Service

BY TYLER HECKMAN, DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP AND MUSIC



Anyone who attended the Lenten worship experiences last spring would have told you how the Spirit of God was moving on those Sunday nights as we gathered together to break bread, lift our voices, and grow as disciples. Not long after, we

decided to make Sunday nights the official time for our new Contemporary Service, a ministry that we prayed would be a blessing to college students, young adults, and more. Many Covenant Partners have been instrumental in planting the service, our resident composer and worship leader Faith Zimmer has been using her gifts alongside the scholars to lead the congregation in worship, and the Lord has been faithful drawing in people to First & Calvary.

Every Sunday since the public launch in August, we have had first-time guests in the service, both believers and non-believers alike. Many are young adults and college students, but the largest demographic is international students. We have connected with people from around the world and make an impact on the MSU campus. Here are some testimonies from a few of those regular worshippers who started coming to First & Calvary because of the Sunday Night Service.

Jami McConnell

What drew you to the Sunday Night Service?

“There’s a longer story for how I ended up at First & Calvary; but, in short, the Lord prompted me to attend the Sunday night service. Once there, I was drawn in by the worship and teaching, yes, but also by the people. From the first night, I felt seen, heard, and cared for; those feelings of being seen, heard, and cared for have only grown since that night. I want to be a part of a body that loves people, as many members of First & Calvary have loved me; so, of course, I keep coming back. (John 13:35)”

What’s been one of the most impactful things about the service for you?

“I’ve been deeply impacted by how Sunday night services (and, in general, being at First & Calvary) have spilled out into my entire week, every week. The teaching and worship linger in my mind, encouraging and challenging me the other six days of the week. The relationships formed on Sunday nights continue to deepen throughout the week as I meet one-on-one or in groups with friends from First & Calvary. And there have been so many ways to get

involved at First & Calvary throughout the week—Bible Study, Soup Night, Musical Offerings, Psalm Sing, Traditional Worship (because now I love and often attend both services), and so much more!”

What has been something memorable from your time on Sunday nights?

“Something memorable from Sunday nights is my feeling when I leave. My heart is so full! I have transitioned out of a difficult season of life and have experienced so much healing within the Body of Christ at First & Calvary. Sunday nights give me the chance to worship my Savior, be challenged to pursue Him plus live out this beautiful faith more fully and spend time with the people who have been vessels of God’s goodness in my life. How could I not leave with a full heart after all that?”

Will Crocker

What drew you to the Sunday Night Service?

“The main thing that drew me to the Sunday Night Service was the fact that I could connect with people more my age (college students).”

What’s been one of the most impactful things about the service for you?

“The most impactful thing about the service for me has been the discussion questions at the end of the Sunday Night Service. It has allowed me to connect with other believers, build friendships, and share the Good News with each other.”

What has been something memorable from your time on Sunday nights?

“The most memorable thing about Sunday nights is the time I spent with my brothers and sisters in Christ. It makes me so full of joy to spend time with everyone. I feel at home here at First & Calvary.”

Jackson Kuria

What drew you to the Sunday Night Service?

“The name was inviting, as being called contemporary meant that it’s modern in terms of how it is run. However, as I have discovered, it has both a touch of traditional and modern with the sermon so faithful to the Old Rugged cross; yet the music ministry is as modern as it can be.”

What’s been one of the most impactful things about the service for you?

“The sermon discussion prompts have been excellent, and the anticipation of our upcoming discussion provides us with an additional incentive to pay close attention to the sermon. That everyone is so keen to be left for the discussion is always an encouragement.”

What has been something memorable from your time on Sunday nights?

“The worship team is lean but possesses a magical quality; they minister so effortlessly, yet their meticulous preparation, which must surely be pleasing to the Master, is visible in the output. They are young and solidly serving; I thoroughly love their ministry.”

Friends, God is doing something exciting at First & Calvary. If you want to taste what’s happening on Sunday nights, check it out on the livestream. If there’s ever a Sunday that works better for your schedule to attend in the evening rather than the morning, we would love to see you there. Please join us in praying that we will continue to meet new people through this service, listen attentively, and look for where the Holy Spirit is leading next.



F&C Church Picnic

Filling Plates and Hearts Every September

BY ROBIN JAQUES, COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST,
AND JOY MYERS, F&C SCHOLAR

Tradition connects our past with our present; it adds meaning to the passing of time. Like most churches, the First & Calvary Presbyterian Church calendar orbits around the two Christian celebrations of Lent and Advent; but in addition, it celebrates a myriad of events that have become treasured traditions to the congregation.

According to *A Brief History of First and Calvary Presbyterian Church-Springfield, Mo.* by Duane Meyer and V. Marie Arnold, published in 1987, mention is made of the first F&C Church Picnic; it tells us that

Each September the Church Picnic has been held on the grounds just south of the Circle Drive. A popular activity with the members, the picnic has provided an evening of fellowship with spirited competition among classes in outdoor sports such as volleyball and horseshoes.”

In 2023 F&C Scholar Joy Myers attended the picnic and spoke with some of the congregants. Here are some of the comments she recorded.

Elinor Davidson

A relatively new picnic-goer, Elinor Davidson, spent her evening enjoying the food. Commenting on what she liked most at the event, Elinor said, “My favorite part is eating. I really, really like every dessert.” She also notes that one of the best parts of First & Calvary is the youth ministry. Elinor also said, “I really like how they plan all the youth parties, and I like the Christmas plays I’ve been to with the children involved.”

Beverly and Neil Stenger

Beverly and Neil Stenger are regulars at First & Calvary’s picnics, having attended nearly 40. Neil said, “My best memory is the food, and the music

has been really neat.” As Neil and Beverly reminisced about the choirs and instrumentalists that have performed in years past, they mentioned the bluegrass at this year’s event was a fun addition.

The Stengers have been members of First & Calvary since 1975. Beverly says her favorite part of the church has been the people. Neil agreed, adding: “It’s always been a church about serving; it’s a caring organization.”

Scott Chappell

“I’ve been to most of these picnics over the last 34 years,” said Scott Chapel, a long-time church member. At the picnic this year, he said his favorite thing by far was the fried chicken. Something Scott has also loved about First & Calvary over the years is the outgoingness of the members. “They’re all very helpful and involved in the community,” he said. However, his best First & Calvary memory by far is getting married to his wife in the church.

Mona Casady-Niewald

Mona Casady-Niewald enjoys the annual picnic because of the socialization with other church members. She said, “We see people in small group meetings, but this is the time to see everyone.” Mona has been to nearly 25 of these picnics.

One thing Mona appreciates about the church is the physical interior and how well it has been preserved. She said, “I especially love the stained-glass windows and carved wood.”

The Church Picnic has been one of the most attended functions of the First & Calvary annual calendar. Plan on attending in 2024 for a taste of genuine fun and fellowship.

Welcoming the Fall with Bonfire Night

BY LISA SMITH, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY COORDINATOR

Our children and families had a blast at our Fall Family Bonfire on October 14 at the Miles' property, Longview. Although it was occasionally sprinkling here and there and was beginning to feel and smell like cool, fall-like weather, we could all stay warm with three large fire pits while enjoying plenty of hot dogs, S'mores, and warm apple cider. There were activities for children, including pumpkin painting and some face painting by our very own Emerson.

As the night grew darker, the Phillips children led the way with their knowledge of the property, using flashlights in the woods on a small trail on the property. It was beautiful seeing the children and parents deepening their connections. Everyone had a great time, and we appreciate the Phillips' and Miles' hospitality.



Musical Offerings Series Relunched

BY DR. JIM DAVIDSON, ADVISORY DIRECTOR OF MUSIC/
PRINCIPAL ORGANIST

In 2023 Dr. James Davidson, Advisory Director of Music/Principal Organist, relaunched and hosted the Musical Offerings Series at First & Calvary Presbyterian Church. In a recent interview, he explained the Musical Offerings Series.

"For nearly 100 years, Springfield has gathered within the walls of First & Calvary for worship. As a congregation, two of our core values are hospitality and a deep appreciation for the beauty of the arts. Wherever one may be on their spiritual journey, joining together in a warm and welcoming community to experience the gift of music can bring us closer to God...and one another.

Music has always been a central part of worship at First & Calvary. With our choirs, ensembles, instruments, and congregational singing, we strive to give our most excellent musical offerings to God. Through the Musical Offerings Series, we invite the greater community to come and experience music of the highest quality without charge while providing musicians an outlet to showcase their incredible gifts in a beautiful setting for an appreciative audience.



Concerts include:

1. Tara Stafford-Spyres, soprano and Michael Spyres, baritenor
2. Missouri State University Chorale
3. Jill Woodhouse, violin
4. Dr. Seth Bott, organ
5. 91st Annual Candlelight Service
6. Chamber Strings Ensemble
7. Ozarks Trombone Quartet
8. Queen City Chorale

The F&C Musical Offerings Series 2023 Begins with World Renowned Performers

BY ROBIN JAQUES, COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

On Sunday, September 24, at 3:00 PM, as the warm fall sun illuminated the First & Calvary church sanctuary, a crowd waited eagerly for a much-anticipated performance.

The performance was part of a program entitled “Musical Offerings,” made possible by the work of Dr. Jim Davidson, the F&C Advisory Director of Music and Principal Organist, and Tyler Heckman, Director of Worship and Music. This was, in fact, the first performance of a series of eight performances that heralded the reinstatement of a beloved program highlighting vocal and instrumental artists performing at F&C. To celebrate the auspicious occasion of the relaunch of Musical Offerings, Dr. Davidson secured the participation of Michael Spyres, world-renowned baritenor, and his wife Tara Stafford-Spyres, much sought-after soprano by the European opera community.

The audience understood the unique privilege of hosting two world-renowned vocal artists, as they entered the sanctuary in their Sunday best, seeking the best available seats. Dr. Davidson took his place at the organ, and the anticipation grew. Congregants sat quietly, searching the Chancel for signs of an entrance, when Rev. Don Everts, F&C’s Senior Pastor and Head of Staff, rose from the front pew to greet them and introduce the performance, the famous performers still hidden in some anteroom awaiting their cue.

Finally, Michael Spyres appeared, and the much-awaited performance began. Displaying unique combination of unassuming modesty and professional posture and delivery, Mr. Spyres commanded the attention of everyone in the sanctuary. As he performed, the thought occurred to me that the music he shared that afternoon seemed uniquely suited to the baroque architecture of the sanctuary. Amid dim light, the dark and ornate carvings of the Reredos, the tile fresco, and the hand-sewn tapestry, the music rose to meet the stained-glass

images. Was it just me, or was the sanctuary smiling?

Throughout the performance, Michael and his wife, Tara, alternated positions at the center of the Chancel. Like a dance, as one performer finished an aria, the other entered to take that one’s place. The dance became a metaphorical waltz when they began to sing together. While each voice highlighted the talent of each performer, they blended together to become one unique and prayerful voice. The performers traded smiles and glances with each other as they performed the duet; and in an unguarded moment of genuine affection, Michael leaned down and gently kissed his wife.

What more can be said except that we are grateful for the work of Dr. Davidson and Tyler Heckman for elevating us with the gift of the return of the Musical Offerings series.



Super Mario Night Wows Adults and Kids Alike

BY LISA SMITH, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY COORDINATOR
AND REV. JAMIE SWOPE, ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP

An idea was sparked when Pastor Jamie took her 9-year-old son, Jason, to see *The Super Mario Bros.* movie in the theater. She was taken aback by how fun the movie was for children and for parents with nostalgia from their childhood. Jason helped brainstorm ideas with Jamie for a family movie night at church for the whole community.

Over 60 people attended our Super Movie Night on Saturday, September 15, including several families who were church guests. Jason was excited that his best friend from school came with his family too! We are so grateful for the many volunteers who assisted with making this event run smoothly. Everyone enjoyed a delicious pizza dinner (Thank you, Carol Chappell, for your help leading the meal preparation!)

Before the movie, families engaged in various activities, including playing the original Super Mario video game and tossing games, coloring Mario pages, and taking photo opportunities with the characters themselves! Princess Peach, Mario, and Luigi were kind enough to come and bring lots of smiles to children and families! One guest with special needs attended with her care provider and shared that Super Mario was her favorite character of all time; She colored a beautiful portrait of a Super Mario scene and handed it to Mario (i.e., Pastor Don) as a gift to him.

There were also door prizes to local restaurants and stores that were raffled off before watching the *The Super Mario Bros.* movie together as a family! We thank everyone who donated prizes. We also enjoyed delicious popcorn and snacks during the movie. Every guest received a bag with goodies, information about our ministries at First and Calvary, and a family devotion that connected

the movie's themes to biblical truths.

Jason Swope confirmed that Super Movie Night was all he had hoped for! Thank you to all who made this a special community event!



Princess Peach (theater scholar, Annette Oliphant), Mario (Pastor Don), and Luigi (Kevin Swope)

International Student Outreach and Soup Night

BY JOY MEYERS, F&C SCHOLAR

Tuesday Soup Nights, hosted by Jef and Yasuko White, gives college students a place to unwind, relax, and connect with a caring community. “It’s not normal for total strangers to have you in their home and be interested and loving,” said Dorcas Mwaura, a soup night regular.

When the Whites moved into their home in 2021, they felt a pull to do something with the space. Yasuko said, “We have more room than we need. I just wanted to love on college students. Provide them a place to have food and fellowship.”

Yasuko and Jef are also part of the Campus Committee, a group from First & Calvary that looks for ways to reach college students. What they have found is that soup nights are becoming popular with international students, specifically.

Commenting on the committee, Wendy Everts said,

We originally started doing outreach to the campus because we felt the need to serve students. They

are right next door to us. What we started seeing was international students were showing up for church and soup nights. It seems to be who God is bringing to us. We have many different students, undergrad, grad, international, and young adults coming, which is great!

Soup nights are growing faster than expected, with anywhere from 15 to 30 students in attendance. Dorcas says, “They make us feel welcome and home; we don’t feel homesick all the time. It’s the only place I get to connect with people and feel like I have a family.”

Another attendee, Lisper Mwangangi, said her favorite parts are the people and playing games with the group. Lisper adds, “And Wendy – always our hype woman.”

Some of the soups Yasuko has made include meatballs, Thai coconut chicken, autumn wild rice, and chicken tikka masala, as well as homemade bread with each.

By opening their home, the Whites have provided a weekly haven for college students to find rest and make lasting community ties.



Encounter Nights

BY ISAIAH MOLER, MEDIA COORDINATOR & YOUTH INTERN



Youth Encounter Nights at First & Calvary Church are more than just fun events; they are opportunities to experience God's love, grace, and power in our lives. Every month our youth gather for a different, exciting, and meaningful activity on a Friday night. We have a blast playing games, making crafts, eating, and more. But we also have a chance to pray, worship, learn from God's Word, and share in small groups. Encounter Nights help us grow in our faith and our relationships with each other.

Every month this fall, we've had a great time! We kicked off with a Jack Box game night at the Everts' home, seeking the Lord for his best for the school year, followed by a Family Feud night where we formed teams and answered trivia questions based on the popular TV show. We hosted a LIVE Clue night, using our detective skills to solve a mystery with clues hidden around the church building, and a Chopped Food night where we showed off our culinary talents by cooking delicious dishes with surprise ingredients. We held a



Family Friendsgiving and Christmas party for the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

Encounter Nights at First & Calvary Church is the perfect place for youth to belong, have fun, and discover God's plan for their lives. If you want to connect teens with others who love Jesus and want to follow him, please invite them. You will be glad you did!

Psalm Sing

By JOY MYERS, F&C SCHOLAR

A new event began this fall at First & Calvary--Psalm Sings! Each Wednesday evening during October, a group gathered in the Chapel and learned how to chant-sing different psalms accompanied by piano. This series, started and led by Tyler Heckman, allowed people to worship God in a new way.

Explaining why he began the gathering, Tyler said,

Years ago, I came into possession of a wonderful resource— *The 12 Point Chant Psalter* by David Madeira—which fits every psalm into a chant-like harmonic progression, making it possible to sing all 150 psalms. It's as cool as it sounds! With First & Calvary's focus on prayer in 2023, the Lord made it clear that it was time to start a Psalm Sing. It was a blessing to have 20-30 people join their voices in the Chapel every week to sing psalms. We all left that last week in October looking forward to the next time we'd hold these nights of prayer in the winter of 2024. Praise God!

Though the crowd's varied musical abilities might seem challenging in a get-together like this, it created beautiful, heartfelt melodies and harmonies. If you want to join, look for the 2024 return of the Psalm Sings. No musical skill is required – just the earnest desire to worship God.



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