

# FALL AT FIRST & CALVARY



FALL RECAP 2025

A SEASON OF ROOTS,  
WONDER, AND  
NEW BEGINNINGS



# Fall at First & Calvary

*A Season of Roots, Wonder, and New Beginnings*



There's something about Fall light filtering through stained glass that makes you think about time differently.

This fall at First & Calvary has been marked by an interesting paradox—we've been celebrating our past while stepping boldly into uncharted territory. We hosted our very first Art Walk, launched a digital journal, and gathered around fires both literal and metaphorical. We've marked 95 years of ministry while asking new questions about what everyday conversations can teach us about faith.

Maybe that's what autumn does best: it reminds us that endings and beginnings often wear the same colors, that the most beautiful seasons come when we're brave enough to let some things fall away while nurturing what's ready to grow.

## Church Picnic

We had our annual church picnic on September 7th, and honestly, it was one of those evenings where everything just worked.

The weather was perfect—that sweet spot where it's warm enough to be comfortable but not so hot that you're melting into your lawn chair. And most people did bring lawn chairs, with a few picnic blankets scattered around the South Lawn.

The usual suspects were there: hamburgers and hot dogs, plus whatever people decided to bring for sides and desserts. There's something reassuring about church potlucks—somehow there's always enough food, and it's always good.

Kids were running around with bubbles, there were some competitive rounds of 9-Square happening, and the Cake Walk made its annual appearance.





Claire Herzog's family band, Eclectica, played throughout the evening, which gave the whole thing a nice soundtrack while people caught up with each other. You know how it is—summer scatters everyone, so fall gatherings feel like reconnecting.

It was simple, really. People sharing food, kids playing games, adults actually having time to talk without rushing off somewhere. Sometimes that's exactly what you need.



## Musical Offerings Concert Series

Our fall Musical Offerings concerts brought three very different sounds to the North Atrium, and each one drew the kind of crowds that remind you why we keep doing this.

We started in September with the Kansas City Baroque Consortium Trio. If you've never heard baroque music played on period instruments in person, it's worth experiencing. Trilla Ray-Carter on cello, Nicholas Good on harpsichord, and Dr. David Hays on baroque violin filled the atrium with the kind of music that feels both ancient and immediate. There's something about hearing a harpsichord in that space that just works.

October brought the Galloway Chamber Orchestra. What I appreciate about this group is that membership is open to anyone—no auditions required. They're led by Yi-Ping Chen and Foster Beyers, and you could tell this was a group that genuinely loves making music together. The orchestra has been offering free concerts around Springfield since 2019, and their enthusiasm is infectious.





In November, we hosted the Central Springfield Community Choir. Sixty-plus voices, “ages 15 to 115”, directed by Dr. Andrew Campbell. They're a non-auditioned choir that performs everywhere from churches to breweries, and you could hear why—they bring the kind of energy that makes you remember why people have always gathered to make music together.

All three concerts were free, which means people can just come and listen without worrying about ticket prices. The atrium continues to be a perfect venue—intimate enough that you feel connected to the music, but spacious enough to handle the crowds that keep showing up.

We've got more concerts planned for the new year, and we're excited to keep living into our values of hospitality and the beauty of the arts.



## Celebrating 95 Years in the Heart of Springfield

On October 5th, we celebrated 95 years since First Presbyterian and Calvary Presbyterian merged to become First & Calvary back on October 1, 1930. We gathered for a single service at 9:45 AM, which meant the sanctuary was fuller than usual—always a good sign for a birthday party.

The service itself felt appropriately festive, with special music that acknowledged the milestone. But the real celebration happened afterward in the North Atrium, where we had set up history displays that told the story of our two churches becoming one in 1930.

It was fun watching people discover pieces of church history they hadn't heard before. The displays drew crowds of all ages, with folks pointing out familiar faces in old photographs and sharing their own memories of the church's more recent decades.

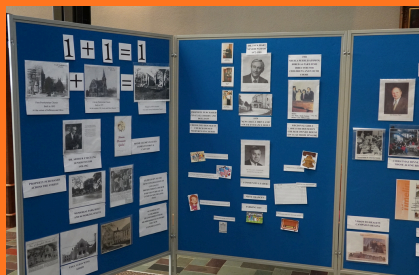
We had giveaways featuring our 95th anniversary logo, and someone went to the trouble of making custom cookies shaped like our church building—complete with stained glass window details. The big birthday cake had 95 candles, and we made sure to have representatives from every generation help blow them out, from our youngest attenders to our most seasoned.





There was trivia, a scavenger hunt, and the general atmosphere of a family gathering where everyone's genuinely happy to be there. It's not every day you get to celebrate 95 years of anything, let alone 95 years of a community that's weathered Depression, wars, social changes, and everything else the decades have thrown at churches.

The best part? Everyone was already talking about the 100th anniversary. Only five more years to plan that party.



## Reformation Sunday

For Reformation Sunday, we set up displays in the North Atrium that traced the history of the Protestant Reformation and how our Presbyterian tradition grew out of that pivotal moment in church history.

It was a chance to remember that our particular way of doing church—with elected elders, democratic decision-making, and an emphasis on Scripture—didn't just appear out of nowhere. The displays walked visitors through the key figures and ideas that shaped not just Protestantism in general, but specifically how Presbyterianism developed its distinctive characteristics. Sometimes it's good to step back and remember that we're part of a much larger story that stretches back centuries.

## Youth Bonfire Night

On October 26th, our youth group spent the evening at the Gerkes' place for pickleball, a bonfire, and way too many s'mores. It was one of those perfect fall nights that reminded us that sometimes the simplest youth events are the best ones.





# First Friday Art Walk

November 7th marked a milestone for us—our very first participation in the First Friday Art Walk. This monthly community event, led by the Springfield Regional Arts Council, invites people to walk through downtown and discover art displays, live music, and creative happenings at various venues. We decided it was time to join in.

We opened our doors to feature artwork from our own talented Judith Garson, and the evening turned out better than we could have hoped. Judith's paintings were displayed throughout the North Atrium, and people took their time moving through the gallery, really looking at the work. Her pieces ranged from vibrant florals to charming rural scenes, and you could hear conversations about technique and subject matter as visitors discovered each new piece.

We had live music from Faith Zimmer, Claire Herzog, and friends, which gave the whole evening a warm, welcoming atmosphere. For those interested in the building itself, we offered architectural and art tours—it's always fun showing people details about our church they might not have noticed before.

Kids had their own craft station, and we served snacks and Italian sodas, which kept people lingering and talking instead of just passing through. Throughout the evening, we had a steady flow of visitors—some church members, some neighbors, some people discovering our building for the first time.

It felt like exactly what First Friday is supposed to be: art, community, and good conversation all happening in the same space. We're already looking forward to participating again.





## Pastor's Book Club

On November 13th, Pastor Don led another book discussion in the church library, this time focusing on Tish Harrison Warren's "Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life." At just 153 pages, it was the kind of book that packs a lot of insight into a manageable read.

The book explores how ordinary daily activities—making the bed, checking email, losing keys—can become opportunities for spiritual formation. Warren's premise is that we don't need to add more religious activities to our lives; we need to see the ones we're already doing differently.

We had a good turnout, and the conversation flowed easily around questions like how to find meaning in mundane routines and whether it's actually possible to turn daily frustrations into moments of grace. It's the kind of book that makes you think about your morning coffee or evening commute a little differently.

There's something fitting about discussing the sacred nature of ordinary life while sitting in a church library, surrounded by the comfortable chaos of well-loved books and the kind of worn furniture that invites you to settle in for a good conversation.

## Created & Creative

On November 26th, we launched something we'd been excited about for a while—Created & Creative, a digital journal showcasing the words, music, and visual art from people in our church community. It's live now at [www.firstandcalvary.org/createdandcreative](http://www.firstandcalvary.org/createdandcreative).

The idea behind it is pretty simple: we have talented people in our congregation who create beautiful things, and this gives us a way to share that creativity with each other and beyond. The journal features three main categories—Art, Words, and Music—so whether someone paints, writes poetry, composes songs, or captures great photographs, there's a place for their work.

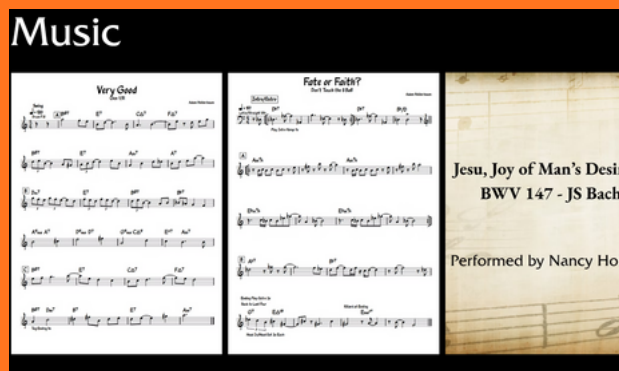
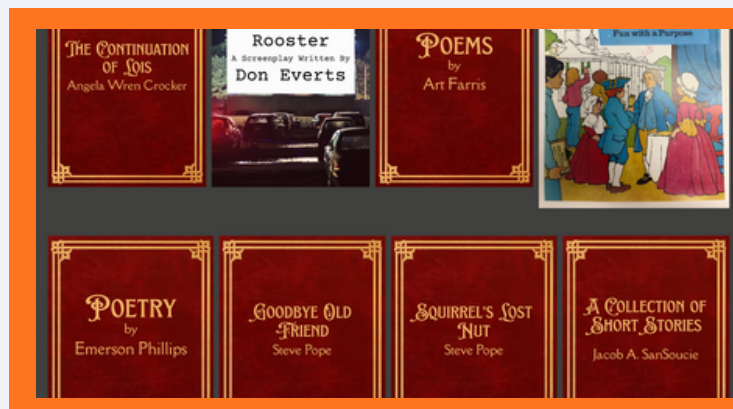
It's both a celebration of the gifts God has given our community and a unique window into who we are as a church family. When you look at what people create in their spare time, you get to see different sides of folks you might only know from Sunday mornings.





The platform is designed to be simple and beautiful, letting the work speak for itself. We're hoping it becomes a place people visit regularly to discover something new from their church family, and maybe even get inspired to submit their own creative work.

It feels like the right time to be highlighting the creativity that's been happening in our community all along.



## Hey Tim! The Power of Everyday Conversations

This fall, our Sunday morning series took us through Paul's letters to Timothy with a twist—focusing on how ordinary conversations can become spiritually significant. "Hey, Tim! The Power of Everyday Conversations" ran from September through November, covering everything from talking with other Christians to discussing temptations and callings.

The series premise was simple: Paul's advice to Timothy wasn't just about formal ministry or big theological concepts. It was about how we actually talk to people in daily life. Each week explored a different aspect—how to share your story, navigate difficult topics, discuss spiritual goals, and even handle temptations in conversation.

What made the series work was how practical it was. Instead of abstract principles, we looked at real scenarios: How do you talk about pain and difficulties without either complaining or pretending everything's fine? How do you discuss your faith without being preachy? How do you have meaningful conversations about callings and relationships?

The final sermon, "Keep Talking," felt like the right note to end on. After weeks of exploring different types of conversations, the message was straightforward: don't stop having them. The conversations that happen between Sundays—over coffee, in grocery store aisles, during work breaks—those matter too.

It was a good reminder that ministry isn't just what happens in church buildings. Sometimes the most important conversations happen when you're not even trying to have a spiritual conversation at all.



## Looking Back, Looking Forward

As we look back on these fall months, there's a thread that runs through all of it—whether it was sharing meals at the church picnic, discovering new pieces of our history at the 95th birthday celebration, or learning about everyday conversations through 2 Timothy. It's all been about connection.

We connected with our past through history displays and anniversary celebrations. We connected with our community through the First Friday Art Walk and Musical Offerings concerts. We connected with each other around bonfires, book discussions, and birthday cake. And we connected our faith to daily life through sermons that reminded us that the most ordinary conversations can be the most meaningful.

The autumn theme of "roots, wonder, and new beginnings" turned out to be exactly right. We celebrated 95 years of ministry while trying new things like the Art Walk and launching Created & Creative. We honored our Presbyterian heritage while asking fresh questions about how faith shows up in grocery store conversations.

Now, as we move into winter and the Advent season, we're carrying the best of fall with us—the reminder that God shows up in both the planned celebrations and the unplanned moments, in both the grand milestones and the simple conversations that happen when we're just being neighbors to each other.

There's more to come, but for now, it's good to pause and give thanks for a season that reminded us why we gather, why we create, and why we keep talking to each other about the things that matter most.