

UKIRK

TALLAHASSEE

Winter Update from UKirk Tallahassee (PUC)

A wonderful winter at UKirk

BY REV. DR. MATT FREASE

As we are just a few days into March, and I take stock of all that has happened this winter, I am thankful for the variety of ways in which the ministry at UKirk Tallahassee (PUC) continues to meet students where they are with a welcoming grace and loving hospitality. Our students continue to step into leadership roles and shape the ministry with imagination, creativity, and love so that we may better reflect God's all-inclusive love.

A couple of highlights from this winter season:

- We took 15 students to the Montreat College Conference, our largest group yet!
- Calvin's continues to operate "in the black," continuing to host monthly open mic nights and expanding to monthly after-hours events called "Calvin's After Dark" events.
- Weekly Community Meals and Evening Worship continue to be significant weekly events with around 50 students being fed weekly and 15 to 20 staying for worship.
- We baptized one student during worship this Spring semester.
- We offer a student-led Bible study as well as a student-led book study.

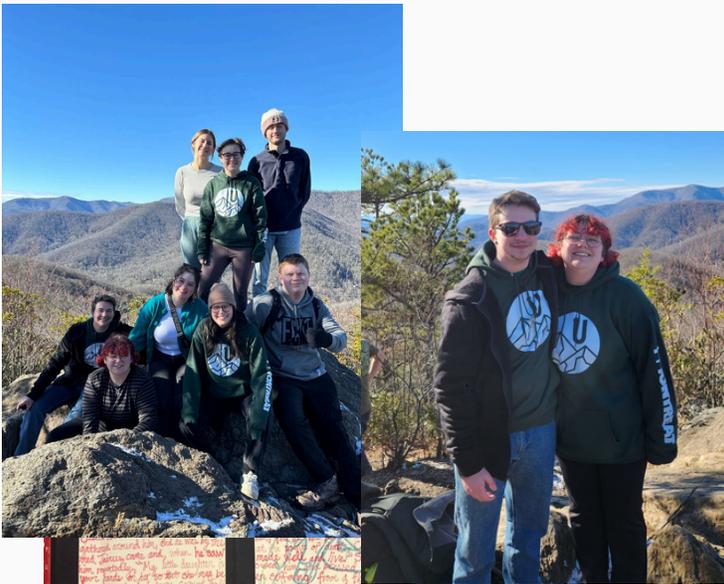
Among these few highlights are countless stories of how this ministry has been a place of welcome and hospitality that continues to support the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual lives of college students.



Montreat Refelction

BY ADAM KRAMER

The Montreat College Conference reopened me to faith and gave me a new perspective on the faith community. I spent my teenage years in the Baptist church, and the Presbyterian environment is significantly different; though I've noticed this in my church environment, seeing it on a larger scale of a conference opened me up to rediscovering my faith. In my experience of the conference, I heard from many different perspectives in the church and encountered conversations I had never myself witnessed in a church environment. I felt that I was being provoked to think about my faith in the context of my actions and inactions rather than focus on feeling or receive condemnation. I also felt that Montreat emphasized the aspect of community in the church, something I value strongly in my faith. As a queer and trans person, community has been hard to find in the church, especially growing up. Despite doing my best to be an active member of a church, I always felt that I was limited in participating in community because of my identity. My experience in church spaces has changed since then, but I feel that Montreat focused on the importance of community and truly sought to build relationships. Community, with all members of the church, was treated as an ultimate strength of our faith and key in navigating the scary and dangerous nature of our current time. Though I was mostly unfamiliar with those at UKirk, I felt that Montreat gave me a true opportunity to get to know people more closely and have tough faith conversations.

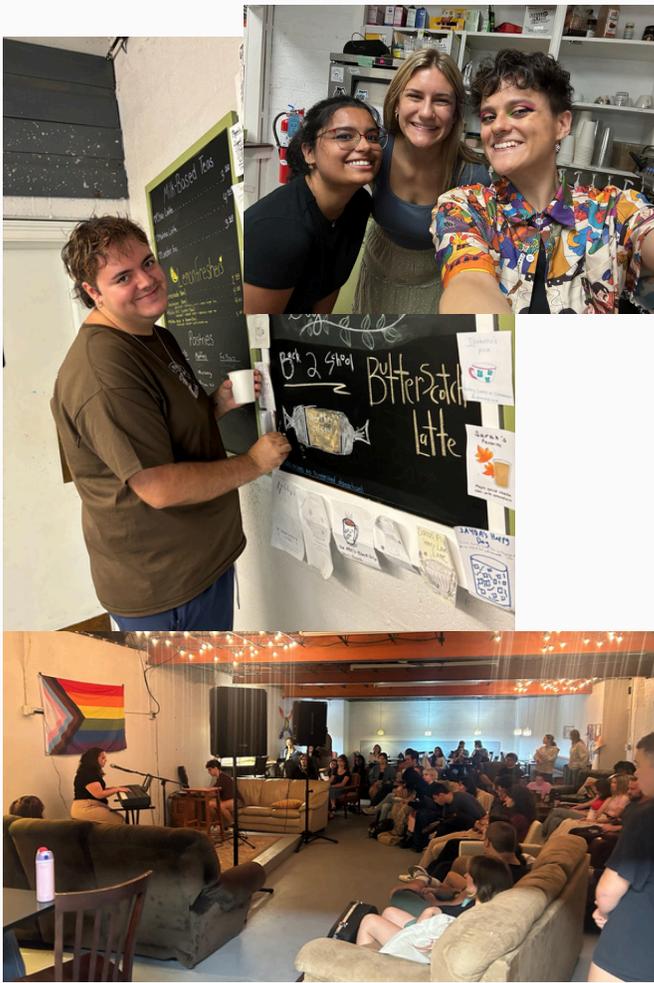


Singing Our Faith

BY SARA VANDERFORD,
WORSHIP INTERN

As part of my internship with UKirk I wanted to do something different. But I also wanted to make sure this difference served the community. I asked around to see what people liked and everyone really liked the idea of writing a song together. So that is exactly what we are doing. The first step was to figure out who we were as a community and what we wanted to say. There were lots of themes we kept coming back to but especially the feeling of belonging. A lot of our members have been in churches where they were told they were not welcome and did not belong. So because of that experience we want to make sure everyone knows they are cared for and wanted here at UKirk. This song is meant to be a call to care for your community, to care for yourself, to care for your friends, and to remember that God is always here to care for you. We have created a space of warmth and welcome and we want to make sure that is reflected in our song. The name of our song is "There Will Always be a Place for You" because that's the kind of community we are called to be. God said to love thy neighbor and he didn't write any exceptions. So we love without exception.





CALVIN'S AFTER DARK

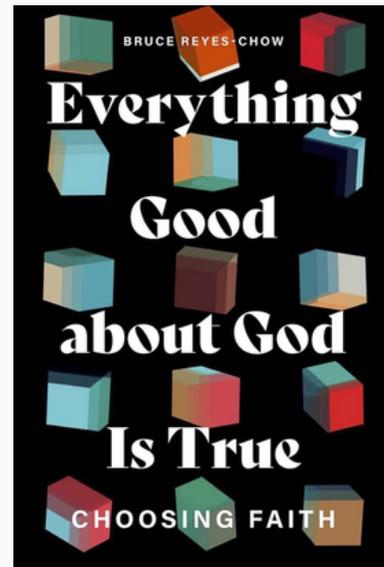
BY ASHLEY BOUDREAUX

One of Calvin's main community outreach successes has been through the monthly open mics. These events provide a venue for several student musicians and artists to perform, as well as a space for students to participate in a welcoming artistic environment. As Calvin's mission is to provide community for the Tallahassee student bodies, extending our outreach beyond our normal business hours and monthly open mics seemed to be a productive next step. This led to the creation of the Calvin's After Dark event series. Taking place once each month, parallel to the open mic series, each Calvin's After Dark event is a creative and unique way to provide a communal space in the evenings, when students have the most availability. These events have ranged from movie nights to art markets and general study sessions. We want these events to be a chance for students to connect, unwind, and find belonging. Oftentimes these events have also brought new faces to our space, broadening our chance to reach out to our community. Through the open mics, Calvin's After Dark events, and our general collaborations with campus organizations, we have been able to extend our ministry beyond coffee, fostering an establishment where students have opportunities to express themselves creatively and authentically. We are excited for what the future holds for our expansion into after-hours events and the possibilities that enable us to continue cultivating the space that our students have come to know and love.

Book Study

BY JOHNNY VODENICKER

This semester, I am leading the UKirk book study. The book we are reading is "Everything Good About God is True" by Rev. Bruce Reyes Chow. Chow centers his book around intentionally articulating how he views his faith and challenging the reader to do the same. The point of our weekly meetings is to provide the space for students to put their own words to their faith, using Chow's own beliefs as a jumping-off point. This organically leads to a conversation that allows students to share what is on their hearts and minds. From my personal experiences, when open and comforting spaces like this are created around and through me, my faith can't help but grow, and I truly feel the presence of God. This is the goal of the study. To create a welcoming and open space to talk about our relationship with God. Thanks for reading about and supporting the work we do at UKirk!



CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF MINISTRY



1950 - 2025

2025 marks the 75th anniversary of ministry in Westminster House. We plan to host a large celebration during the fall to commemorate this moment. More information will be sent out closer to the date. In the meantime, if you have pictures or stories you want to share from your time at UKirk, Presbyterian University Center, United Campus Ministry, or Westminster House Fellowship, please email them to matt@ukirktallahassee.com.



Ground breaking ceremony



Miriam Wilson receiving the key to Westminster house from Dr. Albert Kissling.



Opening Day 1950

