

***Annual Report to the Front Range Region of the Diocese of Colorado
For the Lunch and Life Program, Calvary Church – Golden
August 2025***

Lunch and Life, aka “Church”, provides a home-cooked meal, community, and a word of hope each week of the semester to several hundred Mines students and staff. This ministry is an extension of Calvary’s 157-year commitment to being a civic church - bringing in, building up, and sending out God’s people in the community of Golden. As students and staff come for fellowship, food, and encouragement, we see God at work gathering many college ministries together.

Lunch and Life promotes the health and well-being of college students.

In addition to providing healthy hot meals, including vegetarian entrees, the welcoming ambiance of our weekly lunch provides a space for students to come together to talk about their shared experiences, build relationships and unwind from the highly competitive campus environment. The lunch is an off-campus oasis where students decompress for the sake of mental health and reduced burnout.

Student interest in *Lunch and Life* continued to grow during the 2024 -2025 academic year. During the year we served a total of 11,510 students over 25 weekly lunches. We averaged 450 and 470 students during the fall and spring semesters, respectively and exceeded 500 students on 5 occasions this spring. For this semester, our average cost was \$3.34 per student-lunch

For 2025, Lunch and Life is receiving funding from 3 grants outside of the parish totaling \$17,050, including funding from the Front Range Region (\$7,700); The Oakes Trust (\$5,500) and the Shepard-Holton Trust (\$3,850). We have received an additional \$5,360 from individual gifts through May 30th 2025. As part of last year’s fund-raising activities, we created a short video which captures the weekly vitality of Church in the students’ own words. The video can be found on the Parish website on the “college/young adults” ministry webpage.

Calvary Church acknowledges and greatly appreciates the strong support of the Front Range Region over many years.

Ministry expenses and income are summarized in the table below.

2025 Balance Sheet (January 1st to May 31st 2025)

Ministry Income from Grants and Gifts	\$12,421
Direct Ministry Expenses*	\$20,396
Net	(\$7,975)

*Amount excludes Calvary’s contributions-in-kind for room setup and cleaning estimated to be \$10,000 per year.

The Calvary Vestry has been advised of our increased attendance and concomitant increase in ministry expenditures, further exacerbated by inflation. The Vestry enthusiastically continues its strong support for this ministry including continuing to fund deficit amounts as shown above.

For the spring semester, grants and gifts contributed 61 percent of program expenses.

Student Responses to Ministry

Based on personal comments made to our Volunteers, students personally express their gratitude for the program. Likewise, comments posted on our recent online survey were positive and highly appreciated. Here are some perspectives on Lunch and Life and some student comments.

Lunch and Life is a place where, paraphrasing former Bishop Curry, conversations of understanding can happen while sitting around a common table. Sharing a meal can build bridges between people of different backgrounds, beliefs and generations, creating space for mutual understanding. Conversations around the table can lead to finding common ground by focusing on shared values and experiences. Conversations can lead to spiritual growth and conversion, expanding one's knowledge, and deepening one's faith. Finally, conversations spoken with kindness and love can be transformative, leading to greater understanding, unity and stronger communities.

Conversations during Church are wide-ranging, some humorous and others more serious. Our volunteers recount so many wonderful discussions, thoughts and comments. Here is a sampling of recent stories from around the lunch table.

One table host was taken back when a student abruptly asked, "You're married. What do you think of marriage?" He explained he was thinking of asking his long-term girlfriend to marry him. He also said there were concerns about her family. He was comfortable asking me, his table host, about an important question, in the safe atmosphere we create at Lunch and Life."

Another table host recounts, "Several times we've been asked to pray for a student's immediate need - from doing well on an exam to discerning which of two good job offers to accept. In that case, the graduating senior asked the whole table what they thought was the wisest choice but still asked us for prayers.

Some students have asked about Calvary--what the style of worship is, who the pastors are, times of services. It is so helpful that they see Pastor Scott as a "regular guy" and not as a stuffy priest!" Indeed, we are seeing more students attend services and several have joined the choir and acolyte team.

Known for their hearty appetites, students at one table confessed that they plan their academic schedule around attending Church! For some students being at Church recall being in the communal dining room during their freshman year--they always know they'll be seeing friends and catching up with them. They consider Church a safe place. One student routinely collects the name tags of other students and stores them in a case so to later recall the names of the students that she would not otherwise meet.

Many students expressed their thanks for Church both for the great food and for the time to relax and enjoy the friendship with other students and the volunteers. One student said that she eats more fruit and vegetables each week at Church then she eats the entire rest of the week!

On several occasions students have pulled Bibles from their backpacks and read a verse that was pertinent to a table discussion. They have discussed the church that they attend or have attended in the past. Recently we had a discussion involving several students about the importance of communion to individuals.

A volunteer recalls a favorite memory of an African student he had gotten to know. She came to me after lunch one day and asked me for a favor. She said that her oral exam for her PhD was approaching and that she was nervous and would I pray with her. We went into the couch area and I prayed to the Lord that she would be peaceful and calm and that all the years of preparation for that important day would be in the forefront of her mind for this important exam. When I saw her the next week, she was practically jumping up and down- she had passed easily and thanked me so much.

On one Tuesday a volunteer was having lunch with three students and asked them how they liked lunch. The first said, "It's great - this is the best meal I've had all week", the second said the same thing. The third said "I live at home, and this is STILL the best meal I have all week".

We have grown to love the Mines students and their interesting studies and pastimes. We learn about the younger generation and what's new on the horizon. They learn from our life experiences too.

An outgrowth of Church is our *English as a Second Language* program (ESL) which provides conversational skills and social connection for those who are wanting to learn English in a fun, relational way. This ministry, initiated by one of our volunteers who is a Certified ESL teacher, was formed because many spouses of Lunch and Life students from other countries wanted to converse, meet others, have fun, and have good emotional support, particularly in this time of student visa uncertainty and high housing cost. Currently the class runs year-round, twice a week and includes student from Iran, India, Algeria, Japan, Ukraine, Brazil; Turkey and Columbia. The class offers background in life skills such as getting a Colorado ID, basic car maintenance and the U.S. legal system. The class has made cultural field trips to the Denver Art Museum, a small farm petting zoo, and the Colorado History Museum. Although the ESL program receives no direct funding from the FRR Grant, the program potentiates the impact of Lunch and Life to the student community.

Lunch and Life began as a handful of students and volunteers 25 years ago. Today a dedicated corps of about 20 volunteers faithfully shop, prep, serve meals and enjoy the fellowship that this ministry provides. Another 13 volunteers serve as "Table Hosts" who engage with students over lunch. At our front door, our greeters set the stage for the warm and welcoming ambiance found in our Great Hall.

With the strong support of our Vestry, the corps of faithful volunteers, our generous financial supporters and by God's grace we look forward to another vibrant semester of Christian hospitality with our friends from Mines.

Faithfully.

Craig Horlacher and Jim Kammer

Ministry Coordinators
Calvary Church-Golden

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