

Historic Highlights Calvary Presbyterian Church

1807 – Founded as the First Presbyterian Church, the congregation is the first religious body to be organized in the borough of Indiana. The Rev. James Galbraith arrives in 1809 as the first resident pastor.

1827 – After meeting for a time in the county courthouse, the congregation erects its first building at the corner of Seventh and Church streets on land set aside for the town's religious needs by George Clymer, signer of the Declaration of Independence. The small brick church has a square sanctuary with balconies on three sides.

1840s – A Sunday School is started for the youth of the congregation. Elder John Sutton serves as superintendent until his death in 1877. A great advocate of education, he is also a founder of the Normal School (now IUP) in 1875.

1858 – The congregation's second building, a Federal-style structure with a tall steeple and columned portico, replaces the first on the same site.

1874 – The Women's Missionary Society is started by Elizabeth Walker Hall. Mrs. Hall's husband, the Rev. Dr. David Hall, is the congregation's longest serving minister, from 1874 to 1900.

1890-1920 – The congregation joins in the spirit of the Social Gospel by supporting ministry among Indiana County English-speaking and Italian-speaking Waldensian immigrants. An Italian language service and English-as-a second-language classes are held in the church. Member Sue Williard founds a local chapter of the Children's Aid Society and an Industrial School for Girls, serves as first president of the Indiana Hospital Association, and convinces the state to authorize a children's home in the county. A number of the town's leading women's suffrage activists belong to the church.

1904-1906 – The church's current building, a splendid eclectic structure with both Victorian Gothic and classical Beaux Arts features, is erected. At the time the largest meeting space in town, it hosts numerous community and college events.

1923 – The congregation's minister, the Rev. Dr. Frederick Hinitt, and the Rev. John Timothy Stone of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, meet here in the church and manse to draft a new national structure for the Presbyterian denomination. Their report creates the modern administrative organization that exists today.

1940 – The congregation organizes and hosts an inter-faith worship service uniting the town's nine Protestant and one Jewish congregation in a stand against anti-Semitism, both internationally and locally.

1941-1945 – Church member Jimmy Stewart is one of 241 men and women from the congregation who serve in the armed forces during World War II.

1949 – Boy Scout Troop 29 is founded by returning war veterans.

1954-1955 – A large Christian Education wing is added to accommodate the post-war baby boom children. The addition incorporates stone from the college's Old Leonard Hall, which had been destroyed by fire.

1958 – The congregation chooses a new name, Calvary, to avoid confusion after a denominational merger between the Presbyterian Church and the United Presbyterian Church results in two "First" churches side by side in Indiana.

1980 – Congregation member Julia Pound donates seven acres of ground, enabling the opening of St. Andrew's Village in 1983.

2002 – On the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks, the congregation hosts a dinner bringing together the town's Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities for candlelighting and prayers for peace.

2007 – The tower is stabilized and restored as part of ongoing preservation work to maintain the congregation's landmark building as a vital center of ministry in the Indiana community.