



# Mountain Mover

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH | OCTOBER 2025

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## Fall Festival & Trunk or Treat

Sunday, October 26

Worship @9:30AM

Fun starts after worship

Faith Center Gym & Parking Lot

Free Entry



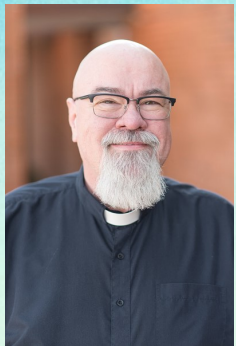
Food - Music - Games - Candy

- 🍁 Adults are needed to help run activities.
- 🍁 We need families to decorate their trunks for the Trunk or Treat Alley and win the Best Decorated Trunk Contest.
- 🍁 **We need lots, lots, and lots of candy donations.**

Sign up in the church lobby to volunteer for this fun-filled community event. Candy can be dropped off in the bins in the lobby or in the church office. This is an opportunity to invite your family, friends, and neighbors to a fun event on our campus.

## Pastor's Thoughts

by Pastor Marvin Havard, Senior Pastor



The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it, for [the Lord] has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers. Psalm 24:1-2 NRSVUE

When I think of the things which **belong** to me, I'm filled with gratitude for the abundance in my life. My basic needs are met and then some. I have reliable transportation, a great job, more than enough clothes, plenty of good food to eat (and it shows!) and more. Then I read Psalm 24 and other parts of scripture, and I'm reminded of the error of that first sentence.

Nothing belongs to me. Our society has trained us to think that the land we live on, the homes in which we live, and the resources of creation that we desire belong to us. If everything in creation is the Lord's, then none of it can truly belong to me. I only have the use of the resources and with that use, a responsibility for the care of those resources.

Think about our concept of land as property. Can we truly "own" part of God's creation? Is creation property that can belong to only one person? It was here millions of years before any human being set foot upon it. How might things be different if we radically reorient ourselves to an understanding of creation as not our property but as a gift we hold in stewardship? Or even more radically of creation and all its inhabitants belonging to us as relatives?

Instead of things and resources belonging to us, let's consider that God has given us these resources not to make our own lives easier but in order that we might share them with others. We belong to the God who set creation in motion and charged us with the care of that creation and all who live in it. We belong to one another as siblings who must care for one another. This is to be part of the body of Christ, to be a member of that body with a particular gift and calling.

The Spirit speaks through scripture to remind us that we are not our own. We belong to the God whose radical dream for creation is that all will belong, all will have enough to thrive, and that no one will be alone. Let us open our hearts to share what we have with those who have the greatest need.

Peace & Blessings,  
Pastor Marvin

*The mission of Faith Lutheran Church is  
to follow Jesus in blessing the world  
with faith, hope, and love.*



## Phoenix Waltz-Reasonover Guest Preacher Sunday, October 19, 2025

Phoenix Waltz-Reasonover (They/Them/Theirs) is a Deaf theologian and postulant for holy orders in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. They are the founder of St. Gallaudet Deaf Prayer Group, an online missional community that served both Deaf and hearing communities through the Covid epidemic. They currently serve on the Joint Interim Bodies Taskforce for Translation and Interpretation for the Episcopal Church and as a Missioner for the Deaf. Waltz-Reasonover's scholarly interests lay at the intersection of Liberation theology, queerness, and Deafness/disability. Their latest writings include "Accessibility and Restoration in Mark 7:24-37: Epilepsy and a Proposal for a Deaf Theology" and "In God's Image: Disabled Bodies, the Church, and the Kingdom of God."

Following ordination and curacy, they hope to pursue their PhD in theology from Oxford University. Waltz-Reasonover is a watercolor artist, a musician, and a poet, who currently lives in Spring Branch with their two teenagers—Heather and Jamie—their service dog—Harley Quinn—and far too many cats.



## Blessing of the Quilts Sunday, October 12, 2025

This year, a total of 50 quilts hand-made by the Faith quilting group will be mailed to Lutheran World Relief and CCSC emergency shelters after a prayer of blessing during our Sunday worship on October 12.

The group meets every 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at Faith's conference room at 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM.

## My Onions Are Not My Own

by Pastor Junfeng Tan, Associate Pastor



Several weeks ago, I led a worship service at a senior living facility, preaching on Jesus' parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin from Luke 15. After the service, as I was chatting with a couple of residents, a lady approached us, looking confused, and said softly, "I am lost. I don't know how to get back to my room."

Before I could respond, another resident turned to her and said gently, "No, you are not lost. I will show you the way to your apartment." She patiently gave her step-by-step directions and reassured her until she felt ready to go.

As I mentioned in my September newsletter, loss is a part of life. The older we grow, the more losses we experience. Yet, the kindness one woman showed another that Sunday reminded me that when we reach out and care for each other, community becomes our safety net. God often comes searching for us, catching us when we are lost, through the loving support of others.

God never intended us to live alone or for ourselves. God calls us to help build a compassionate and loving society where no one is left alone, no one is left behind, and no one remains lost forever. Jesus shows us the way: we are to be like the good shepherd who seeks the one lost sheep, like the woman who lights a lamp and sweeps the house until she finds the lost coin, like the father who runs to embrace and celebrate the returning prodigal son. Jesus also warns us not to become like the Pharisees and scribes who shunned sinners and those who had lost their way.

This reflection brings to mind a story from Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* - a story that speaks deeply to me, and perhaps to you as well.

*Once upon a time there lived a horrid woman who was as wicked as could be, and she died. And she hadn't done a good deed in her life. The devils grabbed her and threw her into a burning lake. Her guardian angel was looking on and thought to himself: "What good deed can I possibly recall to tell God about?" He remembered one, and said to God: "She once", he said, "picked a spring onion from her garden and gave it to a beggar woman." And God answered him: "Why don't you", he said, "take this same onion, hold it out to her in the lake, and let her grab it and hold tight, and if you manage to pull her out of the lake, may she go to heaven, but if the onion breaks, may the old woman remain there." The angel ran off to the woman and held out the onion to her: "There you are, old woman," he said, "grab this and hold tight." And he began to pull her out ever so carefully, and he had almost pulled her out when the other sinners in the lake, seeing that she was being rescued, began to cling to her so that they too might be pulled out. But the woman was as wicked as can be, and she began to lash out with her feet: "He's pulling me out, not you, it's my onion, not yours." No sooner had she said this, than the onion snapped. And the woman fell back into the lake, where she's burning to this very day. And the angel burst into tears and left. (translated by Ignat Avsey)*

In Dostoevsky's parable, sin is selfishness - the refusal to share, to connect, to love. The lake of fire is a metaphor for complete isolation, the absence of God, and the absence of compassion. No one can be saved alone. Salvation is something we receive together.

The way to life is through belonging - to God and to one another. The "onions" we have--our blessings, resources, and opportunities - are meant to be shared. And perhaps, it is precisely these shared "onions" that pull us - together - out of the lake of fire.

### Reflection Questions:

- ◆ Think of a time when you were in need. Who offered you their "onion" and helped you through?
- ◆ If you're facing a challenging time right now, who is your "go-to" person for an "onion"? How can you overcome any hesitancy to ask for or receive help from others?
- ◆ What "onion" will you share with someone this week — a simple act of kindness, a word of encouragement, or a helping hand? May God open your eyes to see who needs your "onion" this week, and may God guide your hands and heart as you share it.



## Faith's Zoom Prayer meeting Tuesday, October 21 @ 7:00 PM

sing prayer songs  
share prayer concerns  
pray for strength,  
hope, and healing



Scan for  
Zoom Link

To submit a prayer request, please email to [jtan@faithbellaire.org](mailto:jtan@faithbellaire.org).

## Candidate for Pastor of Faith Formation - Amber Harbolt

Greetings, people of Faith!

My name is Amber Harbolt, and I am so pleased to be your primary candidate for the new faith formation call you are creating at Faith. We'll get to know each other better at the **Meet and Greet after the learning hour on October 19** but, for now, here's a little of my background:

I'm approved for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament (a fancy Lutheran way of saying after many years of preparation, I'm almost a pastor). I received my Master of Divinity degree from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary with a concentration in Evangelism & Justice. I also had additional training in faith formation, Buddhist ecumenism, and pastoral care. I've served four ELCA congregations throughout the Houston area in just about every facet of church life, from Godly Play coordinator and lay leader on church council to Synod Authorized Minister, Vicar to Director of Operations.

I'm also a medical anthropologist. Prior to entering ministry, I worked for a decade in HIV and public health for local governments. I grew up about 90 minutes outside of Houston in the rural area around Beaumont, and I am a lifelong Texan (save two years in Memphis). I live in Cypress with my husband Jason, who is a structural drafter, and my oldest stepson Griffen, a college senior and football coaching intern at Sam Houston State University. My middle stepson Gavin works in security and does video editing. My youngest stepson, Grayson, is living his best life in Tennessee with his mom's family. I am very much a DIY-er and prefer to learn how to create and fix things myself. I love dogs, interesting earrings, strength training, and checking out all the neat places to shop and snack along Bellaire Boulevard.

What excites me about possibly serving at Faith is the role I'll get to play in helping children, youth, families, and adults grow in their faith and the way they live out that faith at school, work, home, relationships, and all the other spheres of life. Discipleship is an important value we share. I'm also looking forward to learning from the children and youth at Faith, as young people are often some of our most insightful and curious theologians. I'm excited about the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives through Faith Chinese Fellowship and helping develop Faith's Family Resource Center. What I love most about Faith so far is your radical hospitality, your desire for deep relationships with the surrounding community, and your commitment to serving all people, just as Christ did.

There's much more for us to learn about each other, so I hope to see you all on October 19!



## The Dog Who Knows the Way: Día de los Muertos, Creation, and Memory

by Rev. Dr. Jerry Maynard, Director of Worship & Digital Ministries



For many, culture is a sacred part of their existence. While, some are trying to legislate away our rich tapestry of cultures in the United States, there are those of us like myself, who actively invite others into participating in our varied forms of human expression. As an Indigenous person with roots in the Southwest United States, Central Mexico, and Ireland, who grew up in Texas - a border state - I have a deep love for my heritage, particularly our ancient ceremonies that tie us to a way of living that reminds me of the robust power that I have in my bloodline. One of these ancient ceremonies has become a standard practice amongst the borderlands, throughout the country and we are bringing it to Faith Bellaire; *Día de los Muertos*. Starting October 5, we will have a special altar setup to participate in this ceremony and more will be explained in this article, as well as, during Church on Sunday.

In living rooms, community centers, churches, and front porches across Texas and beyond, *ofrendas* - altars of memory - begin to take shape each year in late October. Candles are lit, *pan de muerto* (bread of the dead) is laid out, and marigold petals form paths meant to guide the spirits back. On many *ofrendas*, one particular figure sits quietly and often unnoticed: the *Xoloitzcuintli*, a small statue of a hairless dog with watchful eyes.

It is more than decoration. It is a reminder of an old story kept alive despite colonization; a story older than the Church. This is a story of memory that feeds resilience.

### The Sacred Task of Remembering

Most assume that Day of the Dead is just a Mexican version of Halloween. In truth, it is a sacred time rooted in the Indigenous traditions of Mesoamerica—a time to honor the dead, to welcome them back with a multiday festival that never ends, and to affirm that death is not the opposite of life, but the birth of life.

The original ceremonies followed a cyclical worldview; life and death were part of the same sacred cycle. For the *Nahuas* (including the *Mexica* - my tribe - erroneously called the Aztecs), the soul did not go to heaven or hell, but to *Mictlan*, the underworld; layered place where the journey of the soul continued after death - life after life.

It is here, in that ancient journey, that the *Xoloitzcuintli* enters the story.

### The Xolo: A Companion in Life and Death

The *Xoloitzcuintli*, or Xolo (pronounced “SHO-lo”), is a native Mexican dog breed known for its hairlessness, calm demeanor, and deep spiritual significance. For the *Nahua* and other Indigenous peoples, the *Xolo* was not simply a pet but a “psychopomp” or guide for the soul.

In the journey through *Mictlan*, the soul of the departed needed to cross a wide, treacherous river: *Chiconahuapan*. The only way across was with the help of a dog; the dog who had been loved and cared for in your life. If the soul had mistreated animals or lived without gratitude, the dog would refuse to help them cross or not even appear.

This part of the story offers a practical kind of moral wisdom: compassion and kinship with all creatures matters because it echoes into eternity.



Continued on next page...

## Creation Stories in Dialogue

In the Christian tradition, creation begins in a garden. God forms Adam from the dust and breathes life into him. The world unfolds in a linear arc - creation, fall, redemption, salvation. Death enters as a consequence of sin, and the soul's final resting place is determined by divine judgment: heaven or hell.

In contrast, Mesoamerican traditions speak of creation as a cycle without ending. The holy one known as *Quetzalcoatl* descends into *Mictlan* to gather the bones of past ages, past ways of loving, past ideas, etc., mixing them with his own blood to form human beings; making us sacred (similar to the Christian concept of incarnation). Life is literally made from death. In Genesis, it is the serpent who speaks an erroneous word. In the Nahua tradition, it is the dog who leads out of gratitude and desire to protect.

Yet both stories - Genesis and *Mictlan* - offer guidance. They teach reverence for the life we've been given and humility about where we came from.

## A Texan Ofrenda: Faith, Blended and Beloved

Here in Texas, Día de los Muertos reflects our layered identities. It's not unusual to see a crucifix standing beside a Xolo statue on a family ofrenda. The Virgin of Guadalupe might be present, along with an Aztec calendar. A bottle of Big Red for Grandpa might sit next to a dish of mole for Abuelita. Our altars are not confused. They are complete.

The *Xoloitzcuintli* beside an ofrenda with a wooden cross and the rising smoke of copal incense is more than an image - it's a theology. It says: we are people who have known conquest and colonization, but who have not forgotten who we are. We are people who walk between worlds, led by stories, spirits and, yes, even dogs!

## Practicing Día de los Muertos: A Guide for Today

Whether you grew up with this tradition or are returning to it, there are simple, meaningful ways to participate:

### 1. Build an Ofrenda

Set aside a small table or shelf. Add photos of loved ones who've passed. Include food they liked, objects they used, and things that remind you of them. Add candles. Add marigolds. Add a dog - especially a Xolo, if you can.

### 2. Speak Their Names

This is not just ritual - it is healing. Say their names aloud. Tell stories. Laugh. Cry. Let the veil grow thin with love.

### 3. Honor the Animals

Give thanks for the creatures in your life. Care for them. Remember that the dog is not just a symbol of loyalty in life - it is, in our ancestral memory, a sacred bridge in death.

## Final Word

This *Día de los Muertos*, may your altar be full of objects, memories, but most of all, presence! May your heart open to the special ones that shaped you. In this space, time collapses. Life and death are not enemies. The dog knows the way. And we, the living, are the ones called to remember.

What is remembered, lives...

## October is ELC-CAR Month

by Karen Elsen



**WILLIE LANGDJI**  
Regional representative for  
West Africa and Central Africa

October is Central African Republic (CAR) Month across the Texas–Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod! Each year, we lift up our long-standing companion relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic (ELC-CAR)—a church of more than 120,000 members faithfully serving communities with hope, resilience, and the love of Christ.

A recent letter from Willie Langdji, the Regional Representative of the ELCA for West and Central Africa, highlights some of the accomplishments of the 102-year-old church in the Central African Republic. The church now operates 31 schools in more than 30 remote communities and brings basic education to more than 5000 children in places where educational opportunities are rare.

ELC-CAR is a vital health provider in underserved communities. Its two main health centers send mobile health teams to remote areas to provide mother and child wellness sessions, hygiene education, and preventive care and medical evaluations.

In June 2025 the ELC-CAR held its second obstetric fistula surgery camp at Emmanuel Health Center in Gallo with support from ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response International. Twenty-one women received life-restoring surgeries.

Over the past three decades the ELC-CAR has brought clean water to more than 27,000 families and is working to expand urban access to low-cost clean water solutions in underserved populations.

There is much to celebrate this month with our siblings in Christ in ELC-CAR.



## Come and See: The Practice of Invitation

by Rev. Dr. Jerry Maynard, Director of Worship & Digital Ministries



When Jesus first began gathering disciples, he did not give a long lecture or a pamphlet. Instead, he simply said: “Come and see.” These three simple words carry the radical realization that you can choose possibility over paralysis! In Jesus, there is no demand for agreement, rather an invitation to the adventure of community.

Invitation is one of the most sacred practices we have as people of faith; more than a polite request, it is an act of trust and hope. When we invite another person, we are saying:

*There is room for you here.  
Bring your gifts and your fears.  
We think you matter.  
Together, we make each other more whole.  
You belong.*



With just a few months left in the year, Faith Bellaire is being called to rediscover the practice of invitation. In relation to our programmatic theme of “belonging”, we are actively exploring ideas of belonging while engaging in the spiritual work of community building. An example of these efforts that we are working towards in the coming new year is the relaunching of our 6TEN evening service.

Unlike before, the ethos of 6TEN will grow out of the needs of today:

- a space focused on wholistic healing
- a refuge for college students to find rejuvenation amid the terrifying changes of society
- a gathering that is explicitly interfaith to cultivate a rich sense of spiritual wisdom that a broad group can draw from.

Please note that this evening service is not replacing what we already do on Sundays nor is it to be considered an “alternative” service that you can choose from on Sundays—it is about expanding who we are called to be. Our neighbors, our young adults, and our friends from other traditions are longing for spaces where they can *ask big questions, bring their wounds, and encounter Divine love without precondition or prejudice*. The 6TEN service will be a “come and see”; an invitation to discover what community can be when belonging is the center and tenderness is the methodology.

As we step forward, I encourage each of us to prayerfully consider how we might live out “come and see” not as a slogan but as a lifestyle.

So, now, the only thing left to say - or to ask - is: *Who will you invite?*



### Volunteer with CCSC Food Pantry

*For I was hungry and you gave me food. (Matthew 25:35)*

Come to join the Faith food pantry volunteer team! We serve as receptionists, interviewers, or packers.

**Saturdays @ 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

**October 11, November 8, and December 13**

**Location:** St. Luke's United Methodist Church Gethsemane Campus (6856 Bellaire Blvd, Houston, TX 77074)

To join the Faith Food Pantry Team or for more information, contact Pastor Tan at [jtan@faithbellaire.org](mailto:jtan@faithbellaire.org) or 832-540-6802.



## How Surviving the Holidays works

What happens at a 2-hour event

### Relatable video

The event begins with a 35-minute video that will help you feel understood and encouraged, with stories of people who have found healing after loss and practical tips from experts.

### Small-group discussion

After the video, you will be given a safe, nonjudgmental space to share your experiences and feelings with the group—or simply listen. There's no pressure to talk, if you don't want to!

### Survival Guide


You will be given a Holiday Survival Guide full of tips on how to navigate the season, including coping with painful emotions, handling social events and traditions, and more.

 A flyer for the "Surviving the Holidays" event. At the top right is the "GriefShare" logo. Below it is a photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a conference room. The text on the flyer reads: "Find comfort for the season with" in a small font, "Surviving the Holidays" in a large, white, serif font, and "Support & practical tips for facing holiday challenges after loss" in a smaller font below the title. At the bottom, the event details are listed: "Sunday, November 9, 2025 or Sunday, December 7, 2025 @ 2:30 - 4:30 PM Conference Room Faith Lutheran Church To register: [jtan@faithbellaire.org](mailto:jtan@faithbellaire.org)".

## The power of community

Other people understand

More than just practical tips, *GriefShare Surviving the Holidays* is a community of people who know what it's like to walk through the holidays in grief. You will find connection and comfort in knowing you're not alone this season.



BY THE GRACE OF GOD & THE CALL OF THE CHURCH  
**JOHN VICKERY**  
WILL BE ORDAINED TO THE MINISTRY OF WORD & SACRAMENT

**NOVEMBER 8, 2025**

**2 PM**

**FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH  
4600 BELLAIRE BLVD  
BELLAIRE, TX**

**Bishop Tracey Breashears Schultz, Presiding  
Rev. Will Starkweather, Preaching**

**CLERGY ARE INVITED TO VEST AND PROCESS**

**COLOR OF THE DAY IS RED**

**RECEPTION TO FOLLOW**

**LIVESTREAM AT [WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/@FLCBELLAIRE](http://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/@FLCBELLAIRE)**



**NATIONAL  
HISPANIC  
HERITAGE MONTH**

**September 15 to October 15**

**Faith Lutheran Church**

4600 Bellaire Boulevard at Avenue B  
Bellaire, Texas 77401

Office: 713-664-3048

Fax: 713-664-3371

Faith Day School: 713-664-3233

Mother's Day Out: 713-664-3233

Faith House: 713-664-3048

[FaithBellaire.org](http://FaithBellaire.org)

[FaithDaySchool.org](http://FaithDaySchool.org)

[FaithHouseHouston.org](http://FaithHouseHouston.org)

[info@faithbellaire.org](mailto:info@faithbellaire.org)

**Pr. Marvin Havard**

**Pr. Junfeng Tan**

**Stacy Williams**

**Dr. Jerry Maynard**

**Kendolyn Pope**

**Alan Balius**

**Yu Cao**

**Patricia Deckard**

**Lin Chen**

**Malcolm Mathis**

**Teresa Roman**

**Senior Pastor**

**Associate Pastor**

**Director of Operations**

**Director of Worship & Digital Ministries**

**Director of Faith Schools**

**Organist/Choir Director**

**Office Coordinator**

**Office Coordinator**

**Faith Formation Admin Assistant**

**Facility Sexton**

**Accounting Clerk**

