



# Mountain *Mover*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH | MAY 2026

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### **Pastor's Thoughts**

by Pr. Marvin Havard, p.1

### **Make Me a Channel of Your Peace**

by Pr. Junfeng Tan, p.3-4

### **Godly Play**

#### **- Frequently Asked Questions**

by Pr. Amber Harbolt, p.5-6

### **From Survival to Soul-Care: The Prophetic Role of Worship in Mental Wellness**

by Dr. Jerry Maynard, p.7



COME WITNESS AND CELEBRATE WITH US

## *Confirmation Sunday* *May 3, 2026*

Confirmands will read their  
faith statements during worship.

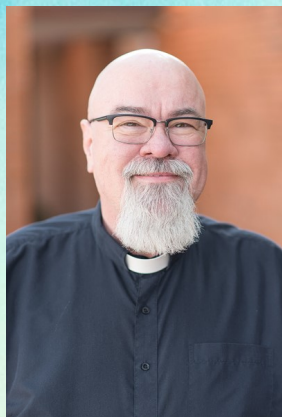
We will celebrate with cake  
after worship in the Fellowship Hall.

The following young people desire to make  
public affirmation of their baptism:

Virginia Lillian Best  
Sidney Joann Fast  
Catherine Elizabeth Lerch  
Myles Xavier Mathis

## Pastor's Thoughts

by Pastor Marvin Havard, Senior Pastor



Our strategic process has begun! I am deeply grateful to those who have agreed to work with me as part of this process from the staff, council, and congregation: Pastor Tan, Pastor Amber, Stacy Bagby, Jason Puryear, Jennifer Blessington, Derek Mauzy, Karen Elsen, Doug Elsen, Byron Best, and Mardi Mayerhoff. We have had our initial two meetings and are moving deeper into the work.

We are using processes from and consultation with the Elemental Group, a consulting firm that helps congregations of various sizes look at mission, vision, and values to chart a future path. You should have received and had an opportunity to fill out a short survey about some of the issues we will be discussing. This process has multiple steps and will take six to nine months to complete.

First, the team will look at four categories of leadership and focus for the congregation: Integrity, Passion, Servanthood, and Imagination. Integrity looks at the systems within which we function as a congregation – governance, decision-making, facility issues; Passion analyzes our energy and deep desire as a community to do the ministry God has put before us; our willingness to serve our neighbors and our outreach are the focus of Servanthood; and our openness to new ideas, creativity, and change are front and center in Imagination. The team will be collecting information and having prayerful conversation on each of these topics. The consultants will take our demographic information (attendance trends, giving, financials, neighborhood makeup, etc.) and our conversation notes, look for concerns and opportunities, and deliver recommendations for improvement.

The next major stage of the process will be revisiting our values, mission statement, and vision for the congregation. Followed by a discerning look at our means of connection with people – our website, worship services, hospitality, etc.

The final portion is the formulation of specific goals and strategies for the coming years which will be used to direct the actions of staff, the decisions of council, and the direction of our programs and ministries.

Throughout the process, the consultants will provide coaching to myself and to the team as we seek discern the future God is calling us into. We will be providing updates as appropriate along the way. Please be in prayer for your staff, your church council, and this team over the coming months.

Peace & Blessings,  
Pastor Marvin

**BE A  
BLESSING**

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




CALLING ALL  
**2026**  
**GRADUATES**

Join us in recognizing 2026 graduates  
at all levels on Sunday, May 17.

Email the names of graduates to  
[info@faithbellaire.org](mailto:info@faithbellaire.org)  
By May 10, 2026

ANNUAL SPRING FAMILY PICNIC

**BUBBLES,  
BOUNCE &  
BBQ**



**SUNDAY, MAY 17  
AFTER WORSHIP**

## Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

by Pastor Junfeng Tan, Associate Pastor



Our April Zoom prayer meeting was held on April 21, just two days after the mass shooting in Shreveport, Louisiana. Before praying for that traumatized and wounded community, we turned to Scripture and listened together to the account of the massacre of the innocents in Bethlehem:

*"When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under... Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:*

*'A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.'* (Matthew 2:16–18)

Through this passage, we stood in solidarity with the community of Shreveport and with all parents who have lost children to gun violence. In that tragedy, eight children — ranging in age from three to eleven — were killed by their own father and uncle. Who can fathom such cruelty, such madness?

The massacre of the innocents in Bethlehem bears witness to this same kind of evil. It calls us not to forget, not to turn away, but to face violence honestly and to bear witness to innocent suffering. We turn to Scripture — to the life of the infant Jesus — to help us confront evil with truth and compassion.

In Matthew's Gospel, the author evokes Jeremiah 31:15 to give voice to the profound grief of mothers whose children were slaughtered. The prophet originally wrote these words to describe the anguish of Israel during the Babylonian exile. Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, became a symbol of mourning for the entire Jewish people. Believed to be buried near Ramah, not far from Bethlehem, her weeping echoes across generations.

Matthew draws on this powerful image to give voice to the voiceless mothers of Bethlehem. Today, we are called to join Rachel — to weep for the innocent lives in Shreveport, cut short so senselessly by the very man who should have protected them. As we grieve with that community, we must allow ourselves to feel their sorrow. Just as Rachel "refused to be comforted," we too must refuse to grow numb or desensitized. We must feel outraged by the tragic fact that gun violence is the leading cause of death among American children. We must resist the temptation toward passivity and cynicism. We cannot accept the resigned murmur: *"These things just happen"* or *"There is nothing we can do."* No — if we are to honor these lost lives, we must refuse to do nothing.

What, then, can we do?

As followers of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we are called to become peacemakers — to be people of nonviolence. Joseph and Mary fled with the infant Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod's violence. One wonders: did they later tell Jesus about His narrow escape? If so, He would have known that other children died in His place. How did this shape Him? Did He carry the weight of that memory — of violence and loss — in His soul? Was Jesus Himself wounded by this unspeakable evil?

One thing we know: Jesus did not allow violence to harden His heart. He did not let trauma define His response to evil. Instead, He became the clearest voice for radical, transformative peace. In the face of brutality, He taught:

*"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you: do not resist an evildoer... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:38–45)

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Jesus shows us that peace and nonviolence flow from a transformed heart — a heart made gentle, trusting, and rooted in God's love.

If we desire to become people of peace, we must allow God to heal our wounded hearts. We must let go of fear, bitterness, resentment, and hatred. We must release the urge to retaliate, to get even, to crush those who have wronged us. Instead, we trust that God's mercy is sufficient — to forgive and receive forgiveness, to heal our wounds, to comfort our grief, and to meet our deepest needs for security, dignity, and love.

The beloved prayer 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace' is often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. According to legend, Francis once tamed a violent, man-eating wolf through the power of Christ's name and his own spirit of gentleness, compassion, and mercy. Whether legend or history, the message is clear: peace begins with a transformed heart and a living faith in a loving God. Peace begins when we can tame the violent beast within our own hearts.

Let us not grow weary in praying for peace — peace in our hearts, in our families, in our communities, and in our world.

*Make me a channel of your peace — Where there is hatred, let me bring love; Where there is injury, your pardon, where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light.*



*A statue of St Francis and the Wolf in Gubbio, Italy*

EVERY 3<sup>RD</sup> TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

# FAITH'S *Prayer Night*

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026

@ 7:00 PM ON ZOOM

TO SUBMIT A PRAYER REQUEST, PLEASE EMAIL PASTOR TAN AT [JTAN@FAITHBELLAIRE.ORG](mailto:JTAN@FAITHBELLAIRE.ORG)

## Godly Play - Frequently Asked Questions

by Pastor Amber Harbolt, Pastor for Faith Formation



I get a lot of questions about Godly Play, both from members and families new to the model as well as people with more experience. This month, I'd like to peel back the curtain from our Godly Play program, answer a few Frequently Asked Questions, and offer some next steps for getting involved with this important ministry.

### Godly Play FAQs:

#### ***Is Godly Play the same thing as Sunday school?***

Kinda yes, kinda no! Godly Play is a Montessori-inspired model for children's faith formation. Unlike "banking model" Christian education where students may be viewed as empty vessels or blank canvases waiting to receive information, Godly Play acknowledges that students arrive with their own backgrounds, thoughts, questions, and theologies.

#### ***Is Godly Play just telling a Bible story?***

There is so much more to a Godly Play Circle than just the story! Rather than the takeaway just being knowledge about Bible stories, the goals with Godly Play are that students

- 1) Gain some exposure to those stories along with the rituals and traditions of the church,
- 2) Begin working with and exploring those stories and traditions through listening, wondering questions and art/project response work, seeing where God and the stories fit into their lives,
- 3) Develop some beginning ways of thinking about and navigating life's existential limits that we all face (death, the threat of/to freedom, the need for meaning, and fundamental aloneness) as they arise in Scripture within a safe, supportive, age-appropriate setting, and
- 4) Build community with one another.

#### ***What happens in Godly Play?***

Every church does Godly Play a little differently. What I'll describe is the typical model that we are working to implement more fully at Faith.

1. Greeting - When their adults drop them off, students are greeted at the door by an adult Door Keeper. Students find a spot to sit on the floor, and get ready for the story.
2. Story - An adult Storyteller uses a beautifully hand-crafted story set to tell the Godly Play story, without reading from or memorizing a script. Instead the Storyteller works with the set and the script for about an hour earlier in the week to learn the story well enough to tell it "close enough" by heart.
3. Wondering - The Storyteller leads the students in questions to allow them to wonder together about the story. There are no wrong answers, though often our young theologians come up with some fantastic and insightful responses. These are questions like:
  - I wonder what part of the story you liked best?
  - I wonder what part of the story feels most important?
  - I wonder where you are in the story, or what part feels like it is about you?
  - I wonder if there is any part of the story we could take out, and still have all the parts we need?
4. Response Time - The students choose what they would like to do for their response time, like working with arts and crafts materials or working with the story sets in the Godly Play room. We call this response "work" rather than "play" because the students can often be working through what they heard in the story or what's on their minds.
5. Feast - With a few minutes left in Learning Hour, the students set aside their work and return to the Circle for the feast. The fare is light and simple - perhaps fruit or crackers. During this time, the students learn about serving one another and take time to share about their weeks with the group.
6. Blessing - When their adults arrive to pick them up, the students receive two blessings before they leave, one from the Storyteller and another from the Doorperson.

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May  
2026

## Pastor Amber's Community Office Hours

Betsy's @ Evelyn's Park  
4400 Bellaire Blvd

(Outdoors if weather is nice,  
indoors if weather is not nice.)

- **Monday, May 11** 10 AM – Noon
- **Thursday, May 28** 1–3 PM

Can't make it but still want to meet?  
Reach out to me:  
[aharbolt@faithbellaire.org](mailto:aharbolt@faithbellaire.org)



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### Who can join in with Faith's Godly Play Circle?

Faith's Godly Play Circle is for grades Kindergarten through 5th grade. However, students as young as 4 may join the Circle on a case-by-case basis, depending on maturity.

### Sounds neat! How can I get involved as a high school student or grown up?

I'm so glad you asked! Here are some ways you can get involved with Faith's Godly Play Circle:

- Bring your children to Godly Play during Learning Hour while you enjoy Real Lutherans!
- See me (Pastor Amber) to learn more about becoming a Doorperson or a Storyteller. These positions are open to high school students and adults. You'll spend a session or two shadowing and learning the basics first.
- Join the local Godly Play Core Training coming up June 4-6 (email [aharbolt@faithbellaire.org](mailto:aharbolt@faithbellaire.org) to sign up)! Scholarships are available, both from the Houston Godly Play Network and from Faith if needed. It is not required to take the Godly Play Core Training to become a Doorperson or a Storyteller, but it's an incredible opportunity I encourage you to take advantage of.
- Donate snacks for the feast (gluten-free, dairy-free packaged).
- Sponsor a new story set or art materials.
- Pray for Godly Play students and volunteers at Faith.

God's peace,  
Pastor Amber

## Godly Play 属灵游戏 Sunday Learning 主日学

Elementary (k-5th) Sunday Learning

小学 (学前班-5年级) 主日学

Preschool (ages 2-5) Sunday Learning

学龄前幼儿 (2-5岁) 主日学



Story 讲故事, Wonder 问问题, Play 做游戏



# From Survival to Soul-Care: The Prophetic Role of Worship in Mental Wellness

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



In our previous reflection, we explored what it means to be **techno sapiens**—navigating life wisely with tech; learning to align our biological rhythms with the ever changing landscape of the digital age without giving way to anxiety or urgency. This tendency to fall into constant anxiety and hyperactivity is both very human and a byproduct of an overly stimulating society. If we turn our gaze toward the fallout of our culture's mandate to always be engaged, we can see why fragmentation happens.

Mental health is crucial for us to discuss, not because it is a trendy topic but because it is apart of our call to be disciples of the Christ who healed - *therapuo (therapy) in Greek*. For the month of May, which is dedicated to mental health awareness, I want to remind us of the prophetic role that worship plays in our call to heal one another.

In many cases, the church has treated mental health as a spiritual failing; a **caring** heart recognizes that our minds and spirits are not separate realities. When we struggle with anxiety, depression, or burnout, it is not a lack of faith; it is a signal that our humanity is being taxed beyond its capacity.

## The Liturgy of Resistance

In a society that demands constant productivity, the act of gathering for worship is a prophetic interruption. It is a space where we are valued not for what we produce, but simply because we *are*.

- **Lament as Release:** True worship creates room for honesty. When we engage in communal lament, we give voice to the "unspeakable" grief and stress we carry. Confessing this "shame" is both spiritual and a psychological catharsis.
- **Regulating the Nervous System:** The rhythms of liturgy: the singing, the shared breath of prayer, and the moments of silence, function as collective grounding which reminds our bodies that we are held.
- **Deconstructing Stigma:** When we name mental health from the pulpit and in our pews, we perform a **prophetic** act. We dismantle the "shame-industrial complex" that thrives on isolation.

## A Call to Action: Moving the Mountain

Wellness is a communal responsibility, not a solitary project. **This month, I invite you to take a concrete step toward "Liturgical Self-Care":**

1. **Check the Pulse:** Reach out to one person in our community—not to "fix" them, but to offer the ministry of presence. A simple, "I'm holding space for you today," can be the lifeline someone needs to feel seen.
2. **Advocate for Rest:** In your workplaces and homes, be the voice that defends the right to rest. Remind those around you that our worth is inherent, not earned.

Let us build a community where our rituals reflect the wholeness God intends for every mind.

Peace and Good things,  
Jerry+

Mental Health America

**MORE GOOD DAYS**  
*together*

## May is Mental Health Month!

This May, Mental Health America is helping people have more good days by meeting them where they are, supporting them as whole people, and understanding that "good" is subjective.

Let's have more good days, together.

Find free tools and ways to get involved at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may)

I COLORI DELL'OPERA  
PRESENTS

*Simply Sacred*

Sunday May 17, 2026  
4:00 pm

Faith Lutheran Church Bellaire  
4600 Bellaire Blvd  
Bellaire, TX 77401



Free to attend. Donations accepted and appreciated. Light bites, fruit and drinks are available throughout the event.

Join us!

Relax and enjoy an afternoon of sacred music selections from classical to contemporary to gospel.

*Relax*

*Listen*

*Enjoy*



**TOGETHER**  
*we are*

**NAMI**Walks



**2026 National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Walks  
Greater Houston 5k Walk  
Saturday, May 16, 2026**

Sam Houston Park, 1000 Bagby Street, Houston, TX 77002  
8:00 - 11:00 AM (walk time) - Registration before and during walk

**Join Us**

Contact Pastor Tan at [jtan@faithbellaire.org](mailto:jtan@faithbellaire.org) or 832-540-6802 if you would like to join the Faith team.



**CCSC**  
Christian  
Community  
Service  
Center

*Family  
Service Day*

**Saturday, June 13, 2026**  
1 hour shifts 12:00-3:00 p.m.  
CCSC - 3434 Branard St.  
Houston, TX 77027

## Join CCSC at our upcoming Summer Family Service Day on Saturday, June 13!

We believe families serving together are a catalyst for change in our community. Join us for a service project your family will love!

During Family Service Day, families will learn about poverty in Houston and the impact of CCSC's work, and pack hygiene kits for CCSC food pantry clients.

Activities are geared toward families with children in kindergarten through 6th grade. Children must be accompanied by an adult; families will serve together.

- One-hour shifts from noon - 3:00 p.m.
- Sign up each family member
- Price to participate: 1 bag of nonperishable food

Families can reserve their spot at [bit.ly/familyservice26](https://bit.ly/familyservice26).

An adult must accompany children to the event and families will serve together.

For more information about CCSC and Family Service Day, please visit our website:  
[ccshouston.org/family-service-day](https://ccshouston.org/family-service-day).



HAPPY  
*Mother's Day*  
**Sunday, May 10**  
*Brunch after worship in the  
Fellowship Hall*



## 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**  
**May 16, June 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 [jt看@faithbellaire.org](mailto:jt看@faithbellaire.org) or 832-540-6802.

## Back To School Needs Volunteers in May



Back To School, CCSC's program that provides underserved students with school supplies, backpacks and clothing gift cards, needs volunteers to assist with client registration May 12-15, 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., at Bellaire United Methodist Church.

Volunteers help check in clients, verify eligibility, and hand out invitations to the Back To School Community Event. Spanish-speaking volunteers are especially helpful (even moderate skills are welcome). Most volunteer jobs are indoors. On-site training and snacks are provided.

To volunteer please email Faith's church office ([info@faithbellaire.org](mailto:info@faithbellaire.org)) to request a link to sign up online. If you have any questions, please contact CCSC's Youth Services Manager Lauren Walker at [walker@ccschouston.org](mailto:walker@ccschouston.org).

 A background image of a stained glass window with various colors like blue, green, and orange.
 

# BE A BLESSING



We will send out invitations soon. If you have an updated address for a former member or Pastor, please email the church office at [info@faithbellaire.org](mailto:info@faithbellaire.org).

**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

FaithDaySchool.org

FaithHouseHouston.org

info@faithbellaire.org

Pr. Marvin Havard

Pr. Junfeng Tan

Pr. Amber Harbolt

Stacy Williams

Dr. Jerry Maynard

Kendolyn Pope

Alan Balias

Yu Cao

Patricia Deckard

Lin Chen

Malcolm Mathis

Teresa Roman

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Pastor for Faith Formation

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

