



Mountain *Mover*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH | DECEMBER 2025

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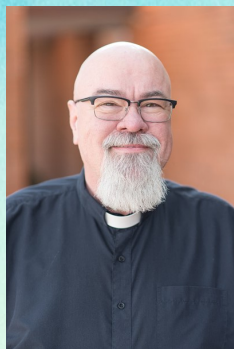
Wednesday Mid-Week Service at noon
Faith Center - Dec 3, 10, & 17

Sunday, Dec 14 - Lessons & Carols @9:30 AM
Sunday, Dec 21 - Christmas Pageant @ 9:30 AM

Wednesday, Dec 24 Christmas Eve Worship
5:30 and 7:00 PM

Pastor's Thoughts

by Pastor Marvin Havard, Senior Pastor



You know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone; the day is near.

Romans 13:11-12a NRSVUE

When I was young, my mom would come into my room and simply say my name to wake me up. Most days that was enough. There were mornings when it took more – a louder voice or a touch on the shoulder. And if I was anticipating something important that day, she could walk into the room, whisper my name, and I'd instantly be awake and ready to go! The anticipation of a special event would keep me on the edge of wakefulness.

Advent is a time of waiting, a time of anticipation, a time of preparation. It's easy to get swept up in the holiday rush with parties, shopping, concerts, and other events. Waiting is not easy and yet, it is a spiritual practice that helps us to grow in our faith. Intentionally withholding gratification for our wants teaches us discipline and helps us to evaluate what we truly need, what is simply a desire, and how the consumer culture of the holidays might have influenced us. The voices of advertising can drown out the voice of the Holy Spirit urging us to wake up and see God at work in our world.

Does our anticipation of the cultural aspects of the Christmas season dull our anticipation of the spiritual meaning? What might it mean to lean into our anticipation of God's presence found in a helpless infant? Might it help us to notice the needs of other helpless children in the world? To work more diligently as advocates for them? How differently would we prepare for the season as a result?

As we move through this season of Advent and prepare for the celebration of the incarnation, be open to the nudging of the Spirit. Let the whisper of your name be enough to wake you up and notice those who need a little extra – a little extra love, support, sustenance, etc. May the anticipation of this season prepare you to welcome Christ not only as a child in a Bethlehem manger but in the person of everyone you encounter this season.

Peace & Blessings,
Pastor Marvin

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



Advent Mid-Week Worship Message Series

By Sanctified Art

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: "In the time of Herod..." This detail may seem minor to modern readers, however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability. A world not so unlike our own. And yet, throughout the stories of Christ's birth, the whispers of

angels deliver a surprising message: "Do not fear." In our own time, we might ask: is it even possible to be fearless in a fearful world? When Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi are each called into God's redemptive story, they do not deny their fears—they move through them. They ask questions, hold fast to courage, trust in good news, and say, "Here I am, Lord." When we find ourselves in fearful times, can we acknowledge our fears while also insisting on hope?

We've crafted an Advent series that takes seriously the angels' message and trusts that Christ's birth truly is good news of great joy for all people. This series looks closely at the fear and terror looming in the background during the time of King Herod and invites us to consider the fears we hold now. Fear can divide and paralyze us, and even be used as a tool for oppression. But what if we formed a different relationship with fear? Can we acknowledge fear without letting it rule us? Might we catalyze our fears into love and action? What if naming our fears helps us see more clearly how God is breaking in and where God is at work? This series gently invites us to identify where fear is present—both in the Advent story and in our lives—while also finding our way toward hope, with the angels' voices in our ears.

Every Advent, we light candles, sing carols, and pray for Christ's coming because we believe God entered a frightened world to bring good news. We hold onto hope because we believe that Christ did come—that's the promise of the season. Our hope is not flimsy or fleeting. It's gritty, resilient, and can endure—no matter what we fear or face. This season, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.

Called to be Mary of Bethlehem

by Pastor Junfeng Tan, Associate Pastor



As we enter the season of Advent and prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth, we are called to remember something profound: we are not meant to be spectators of a great historical event that occurred over two thousand years ago in Bethlehem. Instead, we are called to be participants and actors in God's continuing drama of redeeming, healing, and restoring a broken world.

The 14th-century theologian Meister Eckhart believed that the Incarnation was not just a one-time event that happened in a remote village centuries ago, but a spiritual awakening and transformation meant to occur in the soul of every believer. He famously wrote:

We are all meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of Man is begotten in us.

God is our mother, giving birth to creation and the human family. When Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem, an astounding event took place: the second person of the Holy Trinity became a vulnerable, needy, crying infant. The Holy Child depended entirely on Mary's loving, sacrificial care. Without her mothering heart, the babe of Bethlehem would not have survived to grow, teach, heal, and save.

Today, we are all called to be Mary in the world. Why? Because Christ is perpetually present among the most vulnerable: the poor, the hungry, the naked, the sick, the migrants, and the imprisoned (as Christ teaches in Matthew 25:31-46). If Christ, the Son of God, is forever identified with "the least of these", then we are commanded by Christ to reach out and care for them. We are meant to be Mary in our own time and culture—an outpouring of love and grace in a world that too often knows cruelty and injustice.

One example that comes to mind is the cradle ministry at Faith. For many years, members of our congregation have built and decorated wooden toy cradles, furnishing them with baby dolls and small gifts. These are then taken to CCSC's Jingle Bell Express to be given to children in need. When you participate in this project, you help carry the joy of Christmas into homes that long for hope. Imagine a child picking up a doll from that cradle on Christmas morning—do you not sense that, in some small but holy way, the Nativity is being reenacted in that home, and you have become Mary of Bethlehem in disguise?

We become a Mary of Bethlehem every time we care for the "little Christs" among us.



When you volunteer at the CCSC food pantry or contribute to the Bellaire High School food closet... when you cook meals for homeless youth at Montrose Grace Place or give blood through the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center... when you visit homebound members and share communion... when you bring a meal to a family facing a medical emergency or grieving the loss of a loved one... when you write to or visit someone in prison—you are caring for the "little Christs" in our midst. In those holy moments, you become Mary of Bethlehem, offering tenderness to the Christ who lives in the least of these.

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And when you march in the MLK Grand Parade...when you speak truth to power or defend the dignity of the oppressed...when you pray and work for peace, reconciliation, and the well-being of your community—especially for those who are poor and forgotten—you honor the brothers and sisters of Christ. In doing so, you once again become Mary of Bethlehem.

Finally, let us not forget ourselves and our loved ones. We, too, need to treat ourselves and our dearest ones with gentleness, compassion, and understanding. We need to seek forgiveness and offer it. We need to give and receive the gifts of grace in every season of life. For you and I are beloved children of God, and we are called to be Mary of Bethlehem to one another.

As we journey through Advent and Christmas, may we open our hearts to the Christ who longs to be born within us and among us. And as we care for the vulnerable, speak for the voiceless, and love one another tenderly, may we discover anew that God is still at work—coming to us, through us, and among us. May Christ be born in us this season, and every season to come.



**Sunday, December 7, 2025
@ 3:00 - 5:00 PM**

**Faith Lutheran Church
Conference Room**

**To register:
jtan@faithbellaire.org**

How GriefShare 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.

Story of Our Belonging

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



All around us, during this time of year, a story of festive celebration is being told and promulgated as if it is a universal story that everyone resonates with. However, for many of us, this time of year feels like a story of loneliness, resentment, and fear. At every corner is sparkle and cheer mixed with rushing and sweaty anxiety; no wonder it is so easy for us to feel like we do not quite belong. In the midst of this feeling of disconnection, the Season of Advent begins. Advent is a quiet, steady antidote to our isolation; an invitation back to the "Story of Our Belonging."

Ironically, our story of belonging begins with a moment of *un*-belonging. A young couple, a long journey, and the harsh reality of "no room at the inn." - a story that many of us can probably relate to, especially if you are trans, disabled, or a person of color. Exclusion is considered holy, almost on the level of being a sacrament, in some of our churches. Our religious spaces are constantly making determinations about who is allowed to be in the "inn"; who we deem credible or manageable enough to welcome in. How often do our own hearts and lives echo that inn? We are "too stressed," "too distracted," or "too important" to have any real room? This is where our first practical act of Advent begins: **we make room.**

Making room is the work of the heart—clearing out the clutter of expectation, resentment, or a frantic schedule to create a quiet space. Practically, it could be saying "no" to one more holiday party so you can say "yes" to a quiet evening with people who give you life or it might be the simple, holy act of brewing a cup of tea and sitting in silence for ten minutes, intentionally making a "manger" in your mind to settle that inner war you are constantly waging.

All of this and more, is not something we are meant to do alone. This brings us to the second beautiful truth of Advent: **we wait together.**

In a culture that rewards individualism and instant gratification, Advent invites us into a slow, *communal* journey. Yes, we are waiting *for* something and we are waiting *with* one each other. When we light the first candle on the Advent wreath, we are lighting it with millions of others around the world. We are united in a shared anticipation, a shared hope—expectant faith! This "waiting together" is the practical heart of belonging. The checking in on a neighbor, participating in a shared tradition, whether it's a carol service or simply sharing a meal. These shared acts are the stitches that mend the fabric of our belonging and craft a more robust and dynamic story.

This Advent, I hope you spend time asking yourself "who do I keep from entering the inn and why?" Repent from your gatekeeping and expand the room of your heart so it is more spacious and less of a cold or fearful place.

Remember, we do not do this alone, so gather others with you to begin being more courageous or wholehearted. You belong to this story and *in* this story. You belong with us, so let us wait together with our hands outstretched in solidarity, to do the work of making enough space so we can breathe deeply then become the radical welcome that ushers in the birth of Christ Emmanuel—God with us! Amen.

*To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a-singing,
whose humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing.*

*Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving kindness,
the thunder of the anthems roll to shatter all hate and injustice.*

"Awake, Awake, and Greet the New Morn" (ELW 242)





FIRSTplace

FOR HEALTH

Winter Session 2026

December is a busy month with shopping, eating, visiting family, eating, presents, and more eating. Many people put on weight from Thanksgiving into the New Year. What can you do if you are one of them? Consider joining the **First Place for Health (FP4H) small group** that meets on **Tuesday evenings at 7 PM via ZOOM**.

The group learns about how to improve their physical bodies and their spiritual bodies using the Bible, a Bible study, a food and exercise program, and support from others in the group.

Mark your calendars now to start "*Honoring God with your body*" on **Tuesday January 13, 2026**. More details will follow in the January Mountain Mover and weekly emails in late December and early January. Men and women are welcome to participate and the group is open to anyone who wants to attend and buy the materials.

For more information contact Mardi Mayerhoff at 713-203-1875 or via email mgmayerhoff@juno.com. Read about First Place for Health at www.firstplaceforhealth.com.

Faith's Zoom Prayer meeting Tuesday, December 16 @ 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.



FAITH
Bellaire

BELLAIRE HIGH SCHOOL

CLOTHING *Winter* DRIVE

You can share the warmth this season by donating these cozy essentials:

- ✓ Coats
- ✓ Sweaters
- ✓ Scarves
- ✓ Pants
- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Long sleeves shirts
- ✓ Beanies/hats

Please drop off your winter clothes on Sunday mornings:
December 7 - December 28, 2025

* Kindness is the thread that keeps us warm, even through the coldest days.

Thank-you Note from Bellaire High School



FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

FAITH
Bellaire
BE A BLESSING

A huge thank you to Faith Lutheran Church in Bellaire! Their generosity has been incredible, with multiple food donations to our snack closet supporting Bellaire students and families during a time of great need. Your support truly makes a difference. We are deeply grateful! ❤️

Faith members not only replenished Bellaire High's snack closet but also provided holiday side dishes to **25** student families for their Thanksgiving meal.

You are truly a blessing!



Hanging of the Greens

**Saturday, December 6
9:00 AM**

Come help decorate the church for Advent and Christmas!



It is a tradition at Faith to celebrate Christmas with poinsettias in the chancel area for the glory of God and in honor of loved ones. Poinsettias will be displayed at all services on Christmas Eve, December 24. They may be purchased for \$9.00 (checks payable to Faith Lutheran Church) with "poinsettias" in the memo line. Please place checks in the offering basket or the church office. A sign-up table will be available in the lobby. Deadline to order is Sunday, December 21. Poinsettias may be picked up after the 7:00 PM Christmas Eve service. Those that are not picked up will be donated.

Help Jingle Bell Express Bring Joy to Children



CCSC's Jingle Bell Express program serves families and children in need in three ways: toys for play and learning, books to promote literacy, and grocery gift cards to alleviate hunger. In a time when high prices have stretched families' resources, Jingle Bell Express is ready to serve 2,500 children this December.

You can support Jingle Bell Express by donating new, unwrapped nonviolent toys and books for children newborn to 15 years old, and by volunteering at the event.

DONATE! The toys we need most are scooters, remote control and ride-on toys, and Legos.



Shop the Jingle Bell Express Wish List

Deadline: December 1, 2025

Shop our Amazon Wish List of favorite gift items desired by our clients. Items can be shipped directly to CCSC from this Wish List. Or, if you prefer to ensure the accuracy of your order, select delivery to your home address and bring items to the CCSC office.



Deliver Toys to the CCSC Office

Deadline: December 5, 2025

Hand deliver your items to the CCSC office.

Attn: Jingle Bell Express
3434 Branard Street

713-961-3993



Deliver Toys to Jingle Bell Express

This option is available one day only on Monday, December 8, 2025

Enter Bellaire United Methodist Church from Bellaire Blvd. and park in the East Parking Lot. Drop off items in the gym 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Bellaire United Methodist Church
4417 Bellaire Blvd.

VOLUNTEER!

- **December 9:** Toy & Book Sorting (Volunteer ages: 8+)
- **December 10, 11, 12:** Gift Bag Assembly (Volunteer ages: 12+)
- **December 12 & 13:** Drive-Thru Community Event (Volunteer ages: 15+)

*Volunteers must sign up in advance. Groups of 8+ volunteers please contact seasonal@ccschouston.org to reserve a volunteer shift.

Visit <https://ccschouston.org/jingle-bell-express/> to find links to the Amazon wish list and volunteer sign up page.





Volunteer with CCSC Food Pantry

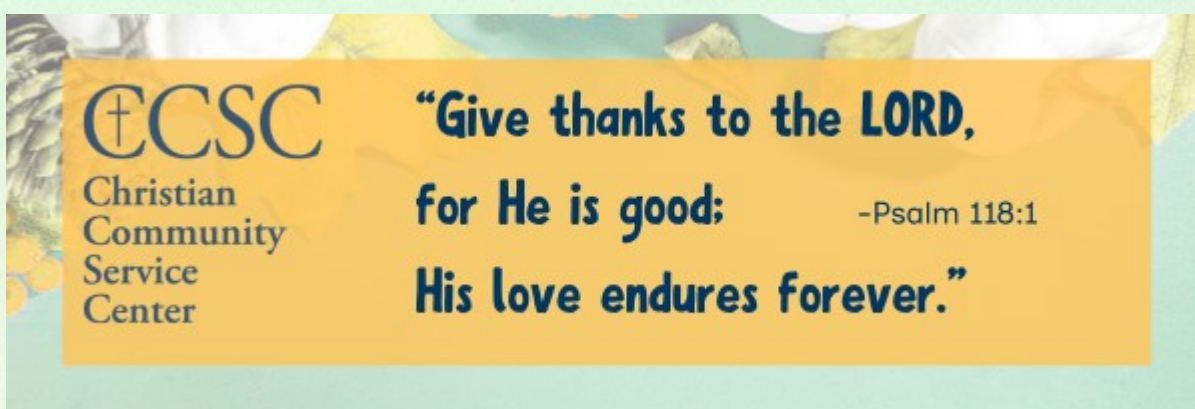
For I was hungry and you gave me food. (Matthew 25:35)

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

Saturday, December 13 @ 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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 or 832-540-6802.



Dear CCSC Friend,

As we enter this season of thankfulness, I want to share a message of gratitude for all you do to help CCSC support struggling Houstonians.

Thanks to you, families in need receive food, clothing, and rental assistance to stay in their homes.

Thanks to you, job seekers receive the training they need to achieve financial stability.

Thanks to you, underserved children receive brand new school supplies, glasses, and Christmas presents.

We are thankful for you! You are making a difference in the lives of our neighbors in need.

On behalf of the CCSC team, we wish you and your loved ones a Happy Thanksgiving!

In Christ,

Michelle Shonbeck
President & CEO

Merry Christmas

& A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR



Faith Lutheran Church

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Director of Operations

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Director of Faith Schools

Organist/Choir Director

Office Coordinator

Office Coordinator

Faith Formation Admin Assistant

Facility Sexton

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