



Mountain Mover

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH | APRIL 2026

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Holy Week Worship Schedule



**April
2**

Maundy Thursday

Dinner Church - 7:00 PM
Faith Center Gym
*Stripping of the Altar
after dinner*

**April
3**

Good Friday

Taize Worship - 7:00 PM
Sanctuary

**April
5**

Easter Sunday

English Worship - 9:30 AM
Sanctuary
Chinese Worship - 9:30 AM
Faith Center

**April
6**

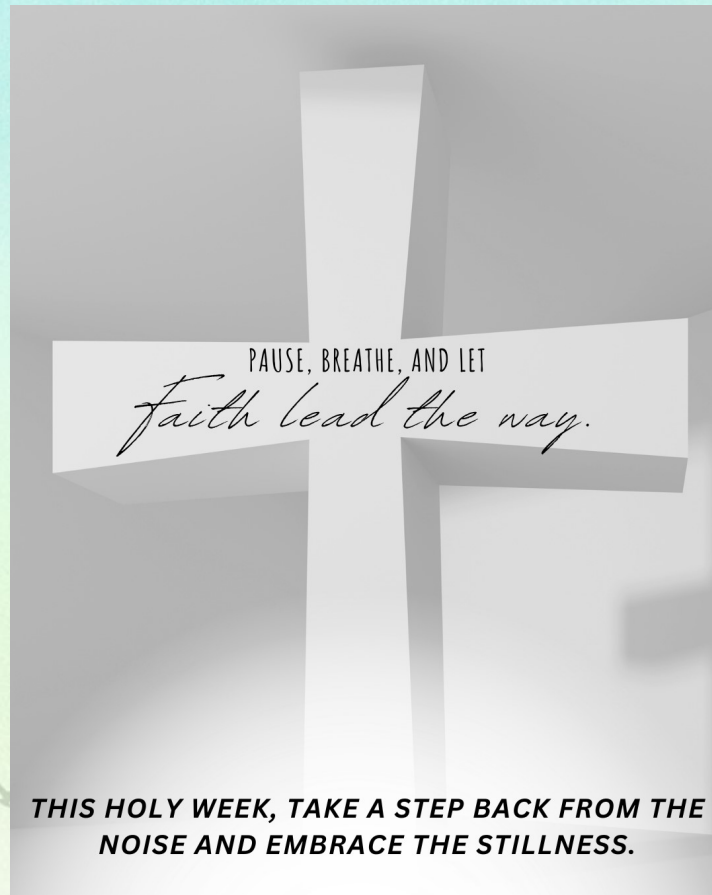
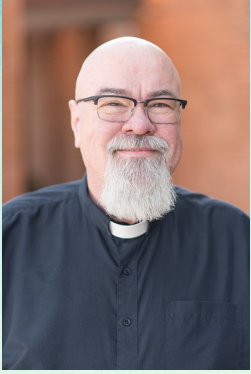
Easter Monday

Church Office and Schools
Closed

www.faithbellaire.org

Pastor's Thoughts

by Pastor Marvin Havard, Senior Pastor



Sunday, April 19, 2026

Immediately after worship in the Sanctuary

Agenda:

Approval to move funds from long-term maintenance account to pay for:

- ◆ URGENT plumbing repair
- ◆ URGENT replace and repair of 2 HVAC units



**SPECIAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING**

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



Second Sunday Service



April 12, 2026

10:45 AM

Working in the Faith Garden

In recognition of Earth Day, April 22, 2026, we are doing a Creation Care-themed Second Sunday service project during Real Lutherans and after the Learning Hour in the Faith Garden at the front of the church on April 12. People are invited to dress comfortably or bring something to change into for work in the garden. Come join us!



Earth Day 2026
Our Power, Our Planet™

From Good Friday to Easter

by Pastor Junfeng Tan, Associate Pastor



I am writing this reflection before Holy Week begins. By the time you read it, we may already be in the midst of the Holy Three Days—or even celebrating Easter. Yet the question I invite us to wrestle with remains the same: How do we move from Good Friday to Easter?

For us as Lutherans, Holy Week—the week of Christ’s Passion—is profoundly important. We believe that as Easter people, we are called to pass continually through the pain, suffering, sin, and darkness of Good Friday, so that we may proclaim with joy and conviction: “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!”

With this in mind, I would like to share a meditation by Martin Luther on a deeply moving scene from Good Friday—the confession of the thief on the cross:

The robber must have seen through the veil of Christ’s body—through shame, disdain, and suffering. Otherwise, he could not have believed and testified that Christ was Lord of a mighty kingdom.... Therefore it is well said that the faith which had died in Peter rose again in the robber...The robber, perceiving his guilt and Christ’s innocence, thinks, ‘Christ’s innocence will help me.’ And he sees right into the heart of Christ, as though through a solid wall. The malefactor is one of us, and we are like him; therefore let us cry unto Christ, and he will say unto us, ‘Yes, truly!’ as he did to the robber. (Martin Luther: Day by Day We Magnify You, page 167)

Luther observes that the faith which had died in Peter—who denied Jesus three times—rose again in the thief hanging beside Christ. Consider the scene: Jesus, at his most vulnerable, shamed and dying. And yet, through agony and humiliation, the thief sees not merely a victim, but a King. He sees beyond suffering, beyond the broken body. While others see only defeat, this man perceives a kingdom. And so, in the shadow of death, hope appears. Jesus responds with words that echo through the centuries: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

I cannot help but wonder: Was this repentant thief the first Easter person?

He did not witness the empty tomb. He did not see the risen Christ. He saw only a dying man on a cross. Yet through faith, he grasped what others could not—Christ’s innocence, Christ’s kingdom, and Christ’s mercy. As Luther paraphrases his insight: “Christ’s innocence will help me.”

Luther describes the thief’s extraordinary vision with striking words: “The robber must have seen through the veil of Christ’s body—through shame, disdain, and suffering... and he sees right into the heart of Christ, as though through a solid wall.”

This invites us to reflect: What are the “veils” and “solid walls” that prevent us from seeing Christ’s kingship and mercy today?

In a world still filled with wars, violence, evil, and injustice—just as it was two thousand years ago—how can we believe that the dying and humiliated Jesus on the cross is the victorious King who has defeated the powers of darkness? When poverty, illness, hatred, ignorance, and prejudice continue to wreak havoc on human lives, how can Christians still proclaim, “Hallelujah! Christ is risen!”?

If we struggle to answer these questions, perhaps the first step is not to condemn the world, but to humble ourselves and learn from the repentant thief.

Continued...

Let us take Luther’s words to heart: “The malefactor is one of us, and we are like him; therefore let us cry unto Christ.” Like the thief, we know guilt and shame. Like him, we know the wrong we have done—in thought, word, and deed. Like him, Like him, we know both the suffering we have endured and the suffering we have caused. But also like him, we may believe: “Christ’s innocence will help me.” When we turn to the crucified Christ and pray, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,” something remarkable happens. The promise spoken to the thief becomes ours: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Despair gives way to hope. Guilt gives way to forgiveness. Death gives way to new life.

Then Easter happens to us.

The first Easter did not immediately change the world. It changed a small group of fearful, broken, and hopeless followers of Jesus. Yet when Christ’s new life took root in them, the world began to change.

If we allow the risen Christ to bring new life within us, then—slowly but surely—the world becomes more and more Easter-like.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen indeed.



EVERY 3RD TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

FAITH'S
Prayer Night

NEXT MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026
@ 7:00 PM ON ZOOM

TO SUBMIT A PRAYER REQUEST, PLEASE EMAIL PASTOR TAN AT JTAN@FAITHBELLAIRE.ORG

Las Presentaciones

by Pastor Amber Harbolt, Pastor for Faith Formation



Each spring at Faith, we celebrate a rite called Las Presentaciones (Spanish for "The Presentations"). Growing out of a Mexican Catholic tradition, Las Presentaciones is a time in worship when we bless children who are turning 3 years old (or slightly older, if they missed Las Presentaciones before) and officially introduce them to the congregation. Typically Las Presentaciones coincides with Candlemas/Candelaria on February 2. At Faith, however, our schedules are often so full between Lunar New Year and getting ready for Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday, and Lent that we don't have as much time to live fully into the rite of Las Presentaciones. Instead, we wait until after Easter, when the gentler conditions of springtime remind us of the newness of life and the promise of the resurrection reflected in the children in our community. This year, we will be celebrating Las Presentaciones on Sunday, April 26 during worship.

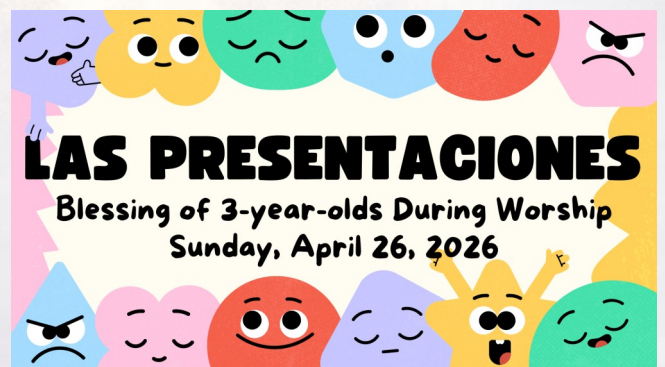
Las Presentaciones has its roots in the story of Jesus's presentation at the temple by his parents in Luke 2:22-38. Around 40 days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and dedicate Jesus to God in the temple as stipulated for firstborn males under Mosaic law. This may have also been a way of giving thanks for a safe delivery and healthy baby as is done throughout many cultures. When Mary and Joseph arrived, however, they were met by an elder named Simeon, who was told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. As Simeon held Jesus in his arms, he proclaimed:

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

Simeon then blessed the family and offered a prophecy reflecting the future of Jesus's ministry. The family was also greeted by Anna, a devout 84 year-old widow who saw Jesus and immediately began praising God and proclaiming God's redemption that Jesus would deliver.

Aside from this story's importance to establishing God's mission in Christ from the very beginning, I love this encounter in Luke because it brings together people from opposite ends of the age spectrum in the community. The elders are proclaiming, prophesying, and praising the incredible things God is doing through this small child. For his part, I imagine Jesus as a baby not doing much other than soaking up all the cuddles and kind words of the elders around him.

I think that's an incredible part of church life in our modern era, too. Beyond spending time with their grandparents, most children do not encounter elders in their daily lives and vice versa. In an intergenerational space like the church, we hold each other's babies, dote on each other's grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, and learn from both the long-lived wisdom of elders and bright-eyed delight of children. As we prepare to bless our 3 year olds this month during Las Presentaciones, I hope you will take a moment to share love, blessings, and encouragement with the families of Faith, just as Simeon and Anna did with the Holy Family.



God's peace,
Pastor Amber

SCHOLASTIC
BOOK FAIR

Sunday, April 19th
9AM TO 11AM
THE NARTHEX

April 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, April 20 10 AM - Noon**

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

FAITH CAMP 2026

GAMER'S JOURNEY

▶ LET'S START GAMING

FAITHBELLAIRE.ORG

WEEK 1: JULY 6-10
WEEK 2: JULY 13-17
WEEK 3: JULY 20-24

From Fear to Stewardship: The Call to Become "Techno Sapiens"

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



Last month, as we journeyed through the wilderness of Lent, we reflected deeply on that sacred season as a crucible for social transformation. We examined how our spiritual practices are not meant to isolate us, but to prepare us for the arduous, beautiful work of reshaping our world. Now, as we move into April—a season that reminds us of the persistent, revolutionary nature of new life—we must turn our eyes toward one of the most pressing landscapes of our modern transformation: the digital frontier.

There is a palpable, social anxiety in our communities regarding technology. We look at the rising generation of "digital natives"—those who have never known a world without the internet, smartphones, or instantaneous global connection—and it is easy to succumb to fear.

We worry about isolation masked as connection, the fracturing of our attention, and the mechanization of our shared humanity. Indeed, the digital realm can absolutely be a space of extraction and alienation.

As we consider what discipleship looks like for the next church, we cannot abandon the digital public square. Instead, we are called to become *techno sapiens*—wise, intentional stewards of technology.

Being a wise steward means recognizing that technology, at its root, is a **medium**; a tool that can either build up the empire of the self or help construct a deeply interconnected God community. When we view the digital world through the lens of sacred interconnectedness, our screens stop being barriers and start becoming bridges. We can use these platforms to amplify marginalized voices, organize for justice, share vital resources across borders, and offer pastoral care to those who are isolated in the physical world.


The prophetic task of the *techno sapien* is to decolonize our digital habits. It is to ask:

*Does this app, this platform, this hour of scrolling serve my liberation and the liberation of my neighbor?
Does it sustain us in the struggle for justice, or does it distract us from it?*

We do not need to be afraid of the digital natives among us; we need to **listen to them, learn their language**, and co-create digital spaces that are rooted in radical love and ethical care. **Technology is not the enemy of the sacred. The enemy is mindlessness.**

A Call to Action for the Techno Sapien:


This month, I invite you to audit your digital footprint—not with guilt, but with grace and intention. Choose one piece of technology or one social media platform you use daily. For the next week, intentionally transform how you use it. If it is a place of passive consumption, use it actively to encourage someone, share a resource for social justice, or connect with a community member you haven't spoken to recently. Let us claim our digital spaces as sacred ground, stewarding our technology to build a more just, connected, and loving world.



PAULINE IMMERSION IN TÜRKIYE & GREECE

"IN SEARCH OF PAUL"

September 22 - October 8, 2026
 a first century immersion for thoughtful rostered leaders and laity to explore Paul's letters in their religious and socio-political contexts
 The Rev. Dr. Don Carlson, Host



In partnership with **TUTKU EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL**

This trip is open to anyone over the age of 18 who is serious about studying scripture and growing their understanding of the first-century Christian movement. Registration closes **May 1, 2026**. Preparation is required.

Contemporary scholars often describe four "Pauls":

- The Paul of the autograph letters: Philemon, 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans.
- The "Paul" of the pastorals: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.
- The "Paul" of Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians.
- The "traditional Paul" of Acts.

Lutherans and other churches of the Reformation may also have a "fifth Paul": the "Paul" of the 16th century.

How did Paul understand justice, righteousness, salvation, faith, law, and gospel as he wrote to diverse urban people living in a society dominated by patronage and Roman Imperial Theology? What does his 1st century gospel mean in a 21st century context?

These are some of the questions we will explore as we travel through the world of the early church focusing on Paul's autograph letters.

For more information or to register, please visit:
<https://leadconnects.org/in-search-of-paul-2026/>

Thank You

Dear Church,

Thank you so much for all the get well wishes, prayers, and meals you provided after my recent shoulder replacement surgery. It was truly heart warming and healing to receive so many examples of care and concern and I am glad to report that I am healing well and glad to be back in worship and choir. I look forward to a return to full participation in all of our ministries. We are deeply grateful.

Peace,
 Karen Elsen

April Faith-in-Action Ministry Focus: CCSC Food Pantry

Each year, CCSC provides thousands of families with nutritious food and gently used clothing donated by caring community members. These donations help keep CCSC's food and clothing pantries stocked and ready to serve Houstonians in need.

Please drop off food in the box in the Narthex during the month of April.

2025 **IMPACT**
REPORT

10,396 5-day food packages distributed

6,595 pounds of fresh produce harvested from the CCSC Garden

CCSC
Christian
Community
Service
Center

Our Pantries Need

**Hearty Soups
(with meat or beans)**
Peanut Butter
Boxed Dry Cereal
Pasta Sauce
Canned Tuna or Chicken
Canned Fruit (all types)
Canned Vegetables (all types)
**Ready-to-Eat Foods (cereal
bars, Vienna sausage, etc.)**
Manual Can Openers
THANK YOU!



**Saturday,
June 13,
2026**

FAMILY SERVICE DAY

Serve together as a family! Family groups will learn about the impact of CCSC's work and participate in a kid-friendly service project. Activities are geared to children in kindergarten through 6th grade.

- ✓ 1-hour shifts 12-3:00 p.m.
- ✓ Sign up each family member
- ✓ Price: 1 bag of nonperishable food



Sign up at bit.ly/familyservice26

CCSC

For the first time, CCSC added a summer Family Service Day in June!

We believe families serving together are a catalyst for change in our community, and Family Service Day is a great opportunity to introduce young ones to service. This event is an easy and fun way for families with young children to serve together. In just an hour, families tour CCSC's food pantry and pack hygiene kits for CCSC clients. Activities are geared to families with children in kindergarten through 6th grade.

Date: Saturday, June 13, 2026
Time: 1-hour shifts available from 12 to 3 PM
Location: CCSC's J. Dean Robinson Building
3434 Branard St., 77027

Price to participate: 1 bag of nonperishable food per family

Families can reserve their spot at bit.ly/familyservice26. An adult must accompany children to the event and families will serve together.



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
April 11, 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 jtan@faithbellaire.org or 832-540-6802.

CCSC Garden Open House

The CCSC Garden team is gearing up to plant and harvest a new season of fresh fruits and vegetables for visitors to our two food pantries.

Come by and take a look during the Garden Open House, **9-11 AM on Saturday, April 25**. Garden volunteers will show visitors the seedling greenhouse, herb bed, raised vegetable beds, and composting area, and chat about what it takes to keep a garden thriving year-round in Houston.



The Garden is located on the campus of St. Luke's United Methodist Church Gethsemane Campus, 6856 Bellaire Blvd, Houston, TX 77074, just across from the fire station. Parking is available on the west side of campus. This is a come-and-go event.

"I am always happy to see the smiles on the faces of our clients when they can take home fruits and vegetables that volunteers have grown in the Garden," Emergency Services-Southwest Assistant Manager Keven Salazar said.

If you are interested in volunteering in the Garden, contact CCSC Volunteer Manager Beth Robertson at brobertson@ccschouston.org or fill out a volunteer interest form on our website [HERE](#). For additional information on the Garden Open House, contact Emergency Services-Southwest Manager Pat Weatherspoon-Hall at 713-402-5154.

 The text "BE A BLESSING" is displayed in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The background is a colorful, abstract image of stained glass windows with various shades of blue, green, and orange.

**BE A
BLESSING**

SAVE THE DATE!



FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

Celebrating
80 Years of Ministry

40 Years of Hospitality—
Faith House

30 Years of Faith Formation—
Faith Camp

SEPTEMBER
19-20, 2026

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

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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

