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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH | DECEMBER 2019

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Scattered Thoughts

by Rev. Kerry Nelson, Senior Pastor



Our Advent theme this year is "What Can't Wait?" Each week we will hear again about the promises of our faith – that no matter how crazy the world feels at times, Jesus brings

hope, peace, joy, and love to our lives. And through us, to the world.

Every time I hear "What Can't Wait," I remember the almost overwhelming feeling of anticipation that was the Christmas season in my childhood. I know we live in a very different world today, but I hope some of that Christmas anticipation is still central to the season.

But I am also mindful of the undercurrents of the holiday season. There are many people who can't wait until it is all over. People grieving the loss of loved ones. People struggling with depression or other mental issues. People for whom the holidays are often marred by painful family blow ups due to the emotional havoc that addictive illnesses bring. People suffering from the disconnect between the imagined joy of the holiday season and the painful realities of their lives.

Throughout my time as a pastor I have long known that people suffering from mental, emotional, and relational issues need more help and expertise than we can offer in "normal" congregational life. The sad truth is that such help is often not accessible or affordable for most people. If you find yourself in a crisis and can't afford \$150 per hour (or more), then you can't see a therapist. Even if your health insurance includes a few visits using your employee assistance program, what happens if you don't get better in six weeks?

Continued on next page...

Wellness Wednesday

7:00 PM—8:00 PM Losing Weight God's Way

our bodies are designed to do.

The Bible teaches that God "my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139) Our bodies are designed to work in specific ways—the closer we live to the way our bodies are designed, the healthier we will be. This group is about learning together and encouraging one another to use food as

(Beginning January 8) 10:00 AM-11:30 AM GriefShare

GriefShare brings people together who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Participants will spend 12 weeks together to learn, to listen, to love, to support, and to encourage one another in processing their grief and healing their hearts.

Prayer Corner - All in the Family by Peggy Porter

Read Ephesians 6:1-9 and Psalm 71



"Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." (Ephesians 6: 1-3)

The love of a family is one of God's greatest blessings on earth. Yet how often we snap and snarl against those we love. Our life givers, our mother and father, should be honored with kindness and respect. Our great gifts, our children, should be nurtured with love and patience. Yet we often bring pride, resentment, and hostility into these family relationships. I know I did as a teen and young adult, when the waters of the parent-child relationship were oftentimes choppy.

Like me, dishonoring-teens-turned-repentant-adults seek the forgiveness of both parents and God. And then, when their own children come along, the cycle repeats. Family relationships aren't easy. We try to love well, but fail, ask for forgiveness, and try again. Yet we have a Father who welcomes our repentance and forgives our sins, washing us clean through the blood of the Son, Jesus. How wonderful to be in the great family of the redeemed.

Pray: Father, we rejoice in the love you have lavished on us, the gift of friends and family, and the promise of eternal life in your presence through Jesus, our Savior. Amen. The mission of Faith Lutheran Church is to follow Jesus in blessing the world with faith, hope, and love.

Continued... What about the rest of your life?

I think we can do something about that.

There are two things that every congregation has in common – empty rooms and a desire to be helpful. When it comes to mental, emotional, and relational help, there are two more things that every congregation also has in common – a lack of the expertise required to provide help that is truly helpful and the money to hire such experts.

I think we can do something about that too.

Ever since I came to Faith, and very quickly grew to love and appreciate the ministry of the Faith House, I have hoped we could do something more. I have long envisioned a congregationally based center to help people experiencing mental, emotional, relational difficulties. A center that follows the model of the Faith House with its own board of directors and its own income stream. A center based on the core values that God invites all people to lives of wholeness, that spirituality works if we work it, that God works best in groups, that we never quit learning, and that everyone pays what they can.

The "Faith Community Wellness Center (CWC)" will be that ministry. Housed on the second floor of our main building, someday this center will be led by a Director of Community Wellness who will oversee its operations, provide some direct services, and supervise interns and other volunteers as they lead various groups of people who come to the center for help.

The CWC will be a ministry for us and to the wider community, and a model for other congregations to replicate all over the country. What could be a better argument for the power and relevance of Christian community than meeting people in times of crisis with a desire to be helpful for the long road ahead. We know that people often turn to the church in times of crisis – developing a CWC will help people not just in crisis but for the rest of their lives. It will be a model based on people helping people with the promise that God shows up wherever two or three are gathered together.

I have been thinking about this for years and now developing the Faith Community Wellness Center has become something that I just can't wait to work hard on and see if we can make it happen.

Midweek Advent Worship

December 4, 11, and 18 at 11:45 AM Lunch will be served afterwards in the Faith Center.

Lessons and Carols for Advent December 8 at 8:30 AM and 10:50 AM Join us during both worship services for special Advent music!

Day School Christmas Program December 19 at 7:00 PM in Faith Center

Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Eve Services Heritage (Children's Message) 4:00 PM 6:00 PM Heritage 7:30 PM Heritage

Sunday, December 29 10:00 AM **Combined Worship**

CCSC's Jingle Bell Express is coming to town!

by Social Ministry Team

On December 13 and 14, CCSC will welcome in thousands of clients to pick up a holiday food package, and toys and books for their children.

Jingle Bell Express began as one of the first outreach programs of the Christian Community Service Center. In December 2018, holiday joy reached 949 families and their 2,865 children through Jingle Bell Express.

Here are the ways you can help:

- Adopt a cradle! Pick up a cradle in the lobby , and take it home to paint and decorate. Return the cradle by Sunday, December 8 to the lobby. Please include a baby doll to make a perfect gift!
- Volunteer during the sort, set-up, and distribution phases. This is a great way for your children to help you and be a blessing themselves! Please look for a sign-up table in the lobby.
- New toys and books are needed for donation for children ages 0-15 years. These should be a child's main Christmas toy, not a stocking

stuffer. Toys should also be nonviolent (not even Nerf guns) and unwrapped please!





Let Christ Be Born In You

by Rev. Junfeng Tan, Associate Pastor



Meister Eckhart was a 13th century Christian theologian and mystic. He taught that the real meaning of Christmas is not only that Jesus Christ was born in a stable, but that Christ is born in us. He said,

Here in time we celebrate the eternal birth that God the Father bore and still bears constantly in eternity, and which is also now born in time, in human nature. St. Augustine says that this birth is happening continually. We should ask ourselves: If it doesn't happen in me, what good is that birth after all? What ultimately matters is that God's birth should happen in me.

According to the gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus." (Luke 1:30-31) Mary asked the Gabriel, "How can this be?"

Today, we may ask the same question: "How can this be? How is Christ to be born in me?" The answer is the same, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you. It is the Holy Spirit who will make Christ's presence known to you."

Jesus Christ was born in a cold, shabby, and smelly stable in Jerusalem. For the first several years of his life, he and his family lived as refugees in Egypt. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit help us see the little Christs in the world today.

I volunteered at CCSC's Food pantry (which is housed at the St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Gethsemane campus) in the morning of November 19. About mid-morning, I saw an African American man sitting on a bench outside. I walked out of the building and asked him, "Mr., are you coming to food pantry to get food?" "No. I am waiting for my pastor. We are having a prayer meeting." I struck a conversation with him and got to know him a little bit. His name is Samuel. Central African Republic is his native country. Before he and his family immigrated to the United States as refugees, they lived in the UN refugee camp in Tanzania for 15 years. Samuel has five children. The oldest child was born in a refugee camp in Congo, and the other four were born in the Tanzania. I met Samuel's wife and two of their daughters that day. They are part of the African Christian Fellowship, which holds prayer meetings and worship services at Gethsemane. It is hard for me to fathom 15 years of hardship and anguish that Samuel and his family had to endure in the refugee camp in Tanzania. I thank God that they made it to the United

States. I am glad they have made Houston their new home. I pray that we all can see little Christs in the faces of all children, especially those who were born in places of war, poverty, and violence.

When Jesus was born, his mother laid him in a manger, an animal feeding trough. When the Holy Spirit makes us see little Christs, we are also to welcome them and make them feel special. For over ten years, Ken Caughron, a member of Faith Lutheran Church, has made wooden doll cradles for CCSC's Jingle Bell Express program. Ken lost his wood shop during the 2017 Harvey flooding. But that did not stop his work. Since 2017, Ken and Troy Becker, who has a wood shop, work together to make the cradles. I'd like to thank Ken and Troy for making the cradles. I'd like to thank all of you who decorate the cradles, and who donate toys, books, and food to the Jingle Bell Express program. I want you to know that when you help children and families in need during Christmas and other seasons, you make the light of God's love shine brighter in the world. And that is how Christ is born in you.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



⁶ Lady of Guadalupe Appears at Faith

by Dr. Clayton Faulkner, Director of Worship, Music, and Technology



You will notice a new piece of art on display in the lobby at Faith this month. We have displayed artwork and textiles from Peru for a while in our lobby. The new art is another step in making a welcoming space for Latinx people. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe may seem out of place in our context but consider the story that accompanies the image.

Control of the feast of the patron saint of The Americas and Mexico and the feast day is celebrated on December 12. The feast in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe goes back to the 16th century. Chronicles of that period tell us the story.

A poor Native American named Cuauhtlatohuac was baptized and given the name Juan Diego. He was a 57-yearold widower, and lived in a small village near Mexico City. On Saturday morning December 9, 1531, he was on his way to a nearby barrio to attend Mass in honor of Our Lady.

Juan was walking by a hill called Tepeyac when he heard beautiful music like the warbling of birds. A radiant cloud appeared, and within it stood a Native American maiden dressed like an Aztec princess. The lady spoke to him in his own language and sent him to the bishop of Mexico, a Franciscan named Juan de Zumarraga. The bishop was to build a chapel in the place where the lady appeared.

Eventually the bishop told Juan to have the lady give him a sign. About this same time Juan's uncle became seriously ill. This led poor Juan to try to avoid the lady. Nevertheless the lady found Juan, assured him that his uncle would recover, and provided roses for Juan to carry to the bishop in his cape or tilma.

On December 12, when Juan Diego opened his tilma in the bishop's presence, the roses fell to the ground, and the bishop sank to his knees. On the tilma where the roses had been appeared an image of Mary exactly as she had appeared at the hill of Tepeyac.

Mary's appearance to Juan Diego as one of his people is a powerful reminder that Mary—and the God who sent her—accepts all peoples. In the context of the sometimes rude and cruel treatment of the Native Americans by the Spaniards, the apparition was a rebuke to the Spaniards and an event of vast significance for the indigenous population. While a number of them had converted before this incident, they now came in droves. According to a contemporary chronicler, nine million Native American became Catholic in a very short time. In these days when we hear so much about God's preferential option for the poor, Our Lady of Guadalupe cries out to us that God's love for and identification with the poor is an age-old truth that stems from the Gospel itself (from https:// www.franciscanmedia.org/our-lady-of-guadalupe/).

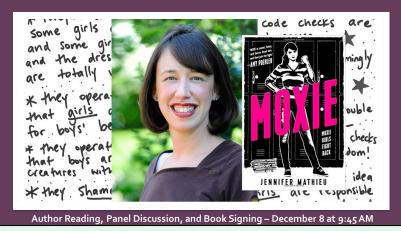


Spotlight on Jennifer Mathieu Blessington - News from Faith Library

by Laura Swanson, Parish Ed Team

We are very excited to shine the spotlight on Faith member, Jennifer Mathieu Blessington. Jennifer's gifts include teaching middle and high school students and writing novels geared towards young adults. As Jennifer puts it, "I have the two best jobs in the worldteaching teenagers and writing for them, too."

On Sunday, December 8 at 9:45 AM in the Fellowship Hall, Jennifer will be reading from and discussing her book, <u>Moxie</u>. All ages are welcome and our students are encouraged to bring a friend and stay for The



Gathering service immediately following. <u>Moxie is an acclaimed novel and soon to be released as a Netflix movie.</u> It tells the story of a high school student in a small Texas town who is inspired by her mother's past as a part of Riot Grrrl.

A limited number of copies of <u>Moxie</u> and Jennifer's newest book, <u>The Liars of Mariposa Island</u>, will be available for purchase on December 8. Jennifer will sign books upstairs in the Library after the event.

I think it's fun when a person's last name matches their occupation. Real examples include Marion Moon Aldrin (mother of astronaut Buzz Aldrin) and BBC weather presenter Sara Blizzard. Jennifer's gifts are blessings to be sure. Thanks be to God that Jennifer Mathieu Blessington is a member of Faith Lutheran Bellaire and we get to receive her gifts. We hope you will join us on December 8!

More about the novel to Netflix "buzz" can be found at <u>https://www.westubuzz.com/articles/2019/06/novel-netflix</u>.

If you have an individual you would like to shine the Spotlight on, please email library@faithbellaire.org.

Christmas Poinsettias

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 Sunday, December 22, and Christmas Eve. 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 plate or the church office. A sign-up table will be available in the lobby. Deadline to order is Sunday, December 15. Poinsettias may be picked up after the 7:30 PM Christmas Eve service through Sunday, December 29. Those that are not picked up will be donated.





The Value of Camp Ministry

by John Vickery, Director of Youth and Family Ministry



Since my early elementary school years I have been involved with summer camp in one way or another. I started my camp experience within my own church, when the local camp would come and do their day camp program. This was a great experience for me as I wasn't ready to strike out on my own and go to sleep away camp just yet, but I wanted to have the experiences to sing the songs and learn the Bible stories, both while making new friends along the way. I think my mother really enjoyed this too; at the time she wasn't too sure about sending me away for a week yet either.

Fast forward a couple of years, I had gotten to know how the "camp" day at the church worked and began to get more and more comfortable with putting myself out of my comfort zone of interacting with people. So I decided that I wanted to try going to the week long program of sleep away camp. Looking back on it now, that single decision has now formed me to be who I am today.

What I discovered was that sleep away camp was really similar to camp in the church building. We sang many of the same songs, the counselors were really cool and nice, and I was able to make many new friends while learning more about my faith. The only difference was that I ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner at camp, and I slept at camp. Within that first week of being on-site it was almost instantaneous, the thought crossed my mind, "Why did I wait so long to do this?"

From that point forward, I attended camp every single summer throughout my elementary, middle, and high school years. Then as soon as I was old enough I became a counselor myself, and even further down the line I lived at camp year round. Even to this day, while I am working at Faith, I am very connected to Camp Lutherhill and their staff, I often talk with them about the programs and how we can support one another.

Here at Faith we have the Faith Camp program. A three week on-site day camp where kids have the opportunity to grow in their faith, and to spend time with other kids who are their age in a positive and enriching environment. I like to look at Faith Camp as a steppingstone for kids to make their way to the over-night camp experience. Many of the same songs are sung, the staff are caring, and so on. It doesn't even have to be a "one or the other!" Lutherhill has weeks of camp all summer long!

I am planning on going to Camp Lutherhill the week of June 7-12, 2020 and would love it if some of our kids and youth from Faith would join me. There are programs that week for all ages from Elementary through High School. They will have a familiar face with me being there, but will also have the chance to make many new friends who believe in the same things that they do.

Camp Ministry is something that is very close to my heart, so if you have any questions or would like to get more information about how you can sign up for a week of camp, I am always all ears!



Children's Christmas Pageant Sunday, December 15 @ 9:45 AM

On Sunday, December 15 the children of faith will recreate the Christmas story for everyone. Be sure to bring your preschool and elementary aged kids to Learning Group at 9:45 AM the weeks before so they can prepare.

Family Caroling & Cocoa Friday, December 20 @ 7:00 PM

On Friday, December 20, the whole family is welcome to join us on this fun event that brings such cheer and joy to Faith's homebound members! Bring your favorite snack or dessert to share with the group! We will meet in the Conference Room in the main building.

Advent Wreath Project Sunday, December 1 @ 9:45 AM Fellowship Hall

All ages are welcome to join us for an Advent wreath assembly project. We will learn about the symbolic meaning of the wreath and have supplies for every family to create their own.

Welcome Bass Family

Anastasia Bass Avery Bass



8:30 AM	Dec 1	Dec 8	Dec 15	Dec 22	Dec 29 10:00 AM				
Acolyte	Andres Baerenwald	James Cross	Luke Cauley	Christian Georgi	John Tan				
Crucifer	Alice Tian	John Tan	Ava Cauley	Elsa Becker	Alice Tian				
Lector	Bob Medlen		Joann Welton	Mardi Mayerhoff	Troy Becker				
Communion Assistants	Barbara McDowell Brian Georgi		Barbara McDowell Lenora Ohlenbusch	Brian and Heidi Georgi	Lorah Gough Roxy Funchess				
Asst Minister	Doug Elsen		Karen Elsen	Karen Elsen	Carol Strawn				
Ushers	Art Grove Carl Watson	Brian Taylor Scott Ramsey	Brian Taylor Scott Ramsey	Bill Puryear Troy Becker	Bill Puryear Troy Becker				
Children's Church	Susan Tallman		Mayra Marshall	Amy McNulty					
Altar Guild	Bob and Ida Medlen			Melinda McGouldrick	~				
10:50 AM	Dec 1	Dec 8	Dec 15	Dec 22					
Acolytes	Silas White Dillon Williams	Aaron Allen Andy Allen	Caleb Fidone Aidan Fidone	Zach Michaud Nate Michaud					
Communion Assistants	Dave and Wendy Farner		Kirk and Beth Bruce	Kelley Keller Steve Walker	24				
Asst Minister	Jim Cross		Dave Farner	Alice Tian					
Ushers	Keith Benson Roxy Funchess	Lerch Family	Jon and Nancy Holmes	Cross Family					
Children's Church	Beth Bruce		Catherine Hahn						
Altar Guild	Bob and Ida Medlen		Cody Gaines Heather Hartman	Sara Karow					

Sunday Worship Leader Schedule—December 2019

If you have been scheduled as a worship leader and are unable to serve, please respond by clicking "Decline" on the Planning Center Online email. You may also arrange to trade with someone else who is scheduled during the month and advise the church office of the change by Wednesday afternoon.

Rebecca Ruth Circle

The Rebecca Ruth Circle will meet on **Thursday**, **December 5 at 10:00 AM** in the Conference Room.

We would love for you to join us for Bible study. Come hungry! Bring your sack lunch. Desserts and drinks will be provided. Socializing with the group is so joyful. All are welcome!!

Women ELCA

Christmas Cards Project Sunday, December 8

The Faith Care Team would like to encourage everyone to sign Christmas cards for our homebound

members to wish them well during this Christmas season. You will find these cards on tables in the lobby on December 8. Let's all spread a little joy!





Hanging of the Greens Saturday, December 7 @ 9 AM

The best way to get in the Christmas spirit is by hanging ornaments on a tree and humming along to holiday classics! The whole family is able to help us with this event. We need lots of hands because we have lots of decorations.

Faith Lutheran Church 4600 Bellaire Boulevard at Avenue B Bellaire, Texas 77401

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FaithBellaire.org FaithDaySchool.org FaithHouseHouston.org info@faithbellaire.org Rev. Kerry Nelson Rev. Junfeng Tan Stacy Williams Dr. Clayton Faulkner John Vickery Kheranie Wagner Kendolyn Pope Yu Cao Patricia Deckard Alan Balius Nettie Rodriguez

Senior Pastor Associate Pastor Director of Operations Pastoral Intern Director of Youth and Family Children's Ministry Coordinator Director of Faith Schools Morning Office Coordinator Afternoon Office Coordinator Organist/Choir Director Evening Facility Manager



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Thu	 230 AM ESL Class (200, 201) 9:30 AM Rebecca Ruth Circle (101) 10:00 AM Rebecca Ruth Circle (101) 3:00 PM Cornerstone (400, 401, 306) 7:30 PM Cornerstone Thursday Meeting (306, 400, 401) 8:30 PM AA Men Only (300) 	12 9:30 AM ESL Class (200, 201) 3:00 PM Cornerstone (400, 401, 306) 7:30 PM Faith Choir (208) 7:30 PM Cornerstone Thursday Meeting (306, 400, 401) 7:30 PM AA Men Only (300)	<u>19</u> 9:30 AM ESL Class (200, 201) 3:30 PM Cornerstone (400, 401, 306) 7:30 PM Cornerstone Thristmas Program (FC) 7:30 PM Cornerstone Thursday Meeting (306, 400, 401) 8:30 PM AA Men Only (300)	26 All Day Church office and schools closed 8:30 PM AA Men Only (300)	
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