

A Publication Of Marvin Church • January 2026



MarvinLife



Inside:
Spring Midweek Classes
Photos, photos, photos!

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). We love this promise that the Scriptures offers to us. It is often quoted by those starting a new season in their lives. It is a great promise, and I believe it wholeheartedly! God is "a good, good Father" (as the contemporary Christian song declares) who desires to give good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11) and who "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20).

What is interesting about the prophecy of Jeremiah is the context in which it is given. When Jeremiah offers these words, the people of Israel are in Babylonian captivity. A false prophet by the name of Hananiah was speaking a similar message of hope to the people except his timeline was very different. He prophesied that God would "break the yoke of the King of Babylon" and within two years the people of God would be back in their homeland (Jeremiah 28:2-3). Hananiah offers a message that would tickle the ears of our modern-day culture, a culture that author Dave Crenshaw calls the "Culture of Now." In our culture, we want immediate results and instant gratification. In the world of athletics, we want a championship within a few years of coaching change.

Jeremiah communicates a very different strategy: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce; marry and have sons and daughters; increase in number. Seek the peace and prosperity of the city...pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29: 5-7).

In the verse preceding the one quoted at the beginning of this article (Jeremiah 29:10), Jeremiah prophesies that the people of Israel would be in Babylonia for seventy years! Now that is a long vision. God will be working as you faithfully settle into your new home. God will do this because God is a good God who offers you both now, and in the future, hope and prosperity.

In his book *Gradually Then Suddenly*, author Mark Batterson reminds readers to "Dream big, pray hard, and think long." Life's seemingly sudden successes are usually preceded by long, dedicated work. As we enter a new year, I will join with others in making some resolutions for my life and ministry. Our strategic planning committee will also continue its work to plan for Marvin's future. With each task, we will remember the long-term effects of our decisions. We often overestimate what we can do in a day but often underestimate what can be done in a month, a year, or a decade. Thank you, Marvin Church for what Eugene Peterson calls "a long obedience in the same direction." May we continue to see God's goodness as we remain

faithful daily in this new year.

I want to turn this column over now to Rev. Jacob Joiner, who will be leaving our staff at the end of December to begin the next chapter of his ministry as the lead pastor of First Methodist Church in Willis, Texas. This is an exciting opportunity for Jacob who will be serving a church in a community that is bursting with growth as the Conroe area grows northward. He has served our church well for the past three and half years and I know that God has plans to prosper him as enters this new season in his professional and ministry growth. Thank you, Jacob, for your faithful service to Christ through Marvin Church.

Doug

When I was appointed to serve Marvin Methodist Church, I had no idea how much of a huge blessing it would be for me even though I knew God was calling me to Marvin the first day I got to tour the church. Dr. Baker invited me to come check out the church during the interview process, and we had the mutual agreement not to disclose why I was here. As he was showing me around between services, everyone that I talked to was too nice! I say this because not only did I get a warm smile and a "good morning", but more than that, y'all were asking questions trying to genuinely get to know me like "are you new to Tyler?" and "what brought you to Marvin?" along with other questions that I had to answer without telling the full truth but also without lying! Y'all were asking me questions that made me feel truly seen, welcomed, and ultimately like I belonged here.

This church is full of faithful, gifted people who love Jesus and love each other. My prayer is that y'all continue to grow and press into what you're already good at doing, which is making people feel loved and welcomed. Continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness in all that you do!

If I had to boil down the past three and a half years of my life into one word, it would be "growth". I've experienced some of the highest highs and lowest lows of my life during this season but through it all, I've grown in my faith, my love for God, and my love for people. Serving as one of your pastors has honestly been one of the greatest honors of my life. The Lord has used all of you to help me grow and I am deeply grateful for the love, trust, and



Dr. Doug Baker

Breathe Women's Conference

Ladies you don't want to miss 2026 Breathe Women's Conference at Marvin Methodist Church on Feb. 6 & 7.

This year's keynote speaker is Allison Allen. She has many roles in life – the former Broadway dancer is a wife, mother, speaker, and Bible teacher that is passionate about sharing Jesus with women everywhere.

Come expecting to have an encounter with Jesus. There will be rich worship through song and fellowship throughout the weekend.

Registration is \$50 and can be secured online at marvin.church.



Keynote Speaker Allison Allen



Women's Bible Study

Join us as we study God's Word together this Spring. There is no book to be purchased, so grab your Bible and join us each Tuesday, beginning Jan. 13 at 10 a.m. in the library. Together we will seek Jesus, study His Word, and build community.

For Women's Ministry info, contact Brandy Stevens at 903.405.4762 or bstevens@marvin.church.

Stay up to date: Text "womens" to 90382.

Susanna Wesley Circle
We will not gather in January due to Martin Luther King Holiday.

Amazing Grace Night Circle
We will gather on Tuesday, Jan. 20 at 6 p.m. at 3501 Rock Creek, Tyler. Linda Armstrong, Gina Baker, and Kara Story, who recently toured Israel and Jordan, will share their Holy Land experience.

Dinner will include homemade soup. All women are welcome, and we encourage you to bring a friend.

MARVIN MAHJONG



This group meets on the first and third Thursday's of each month from noon to 3 p.m. in the Arts & Crafts room on the second floor of Marvin. Anyone is invited to come and join us for Mahjong, food and fellowship. We provide decaf coffee and water. Everyone is encouraged to bring a light snack to share. If you already know how to play—GREAT, and if you want to learn or want to observe, you are welcomed. Looking forward to a wonderful New Year of Mahjong!



[Reflections, cont.]

encouragement you have shown me.

I'm going to miss y'all so much but I'm also excited that the Lord is leading me to share everything I've learned during my time here with our brothers and sisters in Christ down in Willis Texas. May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always!

Jacob



Wednesdays, Jan. 14 - April 29

Midweek will not meet on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 18), Spring Break (Mar 11), or Holy Week (Apr 1).

The first midweek meal is spaghetti with meat sauce. Each week the \$5 meal begins at 5 p.m. and classes are from 6-7 p.m.



Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
COLOSSIANS 2:6-7 [ESV]

Rooted is designed to equip parents to nurture faith throughout every stage of the parenting journey. Through Christ-centered conversations, practical tools, and biblical wisdom, these gatherings will help parents invite their children into a life-changing relationship with Christ.

Open to all Marvin adults with children or grandchildren—as well as anyone involved in shaping the faith of the next generation—Rooted provides guidance for raising disciples who share the love and hope of Christ.

Details of our first gathering are below:

Who: Kevin East, President and CEO of Mentoring Alliance

What: Grace-based parenting

When: Thursday, Jan. 22, from 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Where: Marvin Methodist Church
Cost: \$5/person or \$10/couple

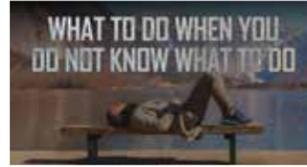


JESUS IS BETTER

This study through the book of Hebrews explores the supreme greatness of Jesus—His glory, His salvation, His covenant, and

His unshakable kingdom. Each session focuses on a key passage, helping participants grasp how Christ surpasses every earthly hope and strengthens us to persevere in faith.

Taught by Jason Jennings. Jan. 14 to March 18.



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO

We often find ourselves not knowing what to do when

faced with unexpected problems, decisions, and trials. We can know what to do if we will earnestly seek God's guidance and become obedient to his leading.

Led by Dr. Pat Day. Jan. 14 to March 4



THIRTY QUESTIONS

The word *catechism* means “to echo,” and this ten-week class invites participants to echo the core truths of the Christian faith

with clarity and joy. Using *Thirty Questions: A Short Catechism on the Christian Faith*, this study explores the essentials of Christianity through short, memorable questions and thoughtful answers. It's ideal for anyone wanting a deeper understanding of the faith or a stronger foundation for sharing it with others.

Facilitated by Gerry Giles. Jan. 21 to April 15.



MEN ARE LIKE WAFFLES, WOMEN ARE LIKE SPAGHETTI

If you've ever wondered how your marriage can move

from ecstasy to exasperation in one day, this study is for you. Based on Bill and Pam Farrel's bestselling book, this 11-week class provides practical help, biblical wisdom, and “lightbulb moments” about how men and women think and connect. Designed for married or engaged women, offered on Tuesday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Childcare available.

Facilitated by Karen Norton. Jan. 13/14 to April 14/15.

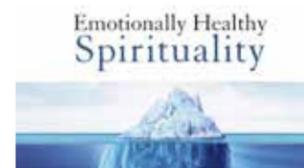


JESUS, THE TABLE AND ME

This class invites you to discover how Jesus uses simple tables and ordinary

moments to shape our lives and bless the people around us. Through conversations about hospitality, helping well, and creating space for others, we'll learn practices that foster meaningful relationships. Each week includes teaching, discussion, and doable challenges to help you live the love of Jesus with intention.

Led by Adam Kovach. March 25 to April 29.



EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

This study of Peter Scazzero's Emotionally Healthy Spirituality helps participants identify the

patterns and wounds that keep them stuck spiritually. The class explores why emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable and introduces rhythms that break through barriers, deepen intimacy with Christ, and foster wholeness in community.

Facilitated by Carolyn Hutson. Jan. 14 to March 25.



LIFE TO LIFE

Life to Life is a relational, hands-on discipleship experience that teaches practical spiritual rhythms

rooted in community. Developed by Gina and Doug Baker, this curriculum has helped believers grow in Christ for more than a decade through accessible practices and meaningful weekly reflection. Participants will learn intentional habits that foster steady, authentic spiritual formation.

Facilitated by Gina and Doug Baker. Jan. 14 to Feb. 11.

Scan to sign up for classes and the meal



FORMATION FOR THE MISSION

Formation for the Mission is a Wednesday night lab designed to break the patterns that

quietly disciple us away from Jesus. This practical, hands-on experience explores simple spiritual habits that disrupt hurry, distraction, and self-reliance—forming a life awake to God's presence and strengthened by His grace.

Facilitated by Marc Donaldson. April 8-29.

Midweek is one part of our church's discipleship pathway—designed to help us grow deeper in Christ and go with Him in everyday life. Explore the pathway and register for classes at:

marvin.church/midweek
Contact Marc Donaldson with any questions at mdonaldson@marvin.church



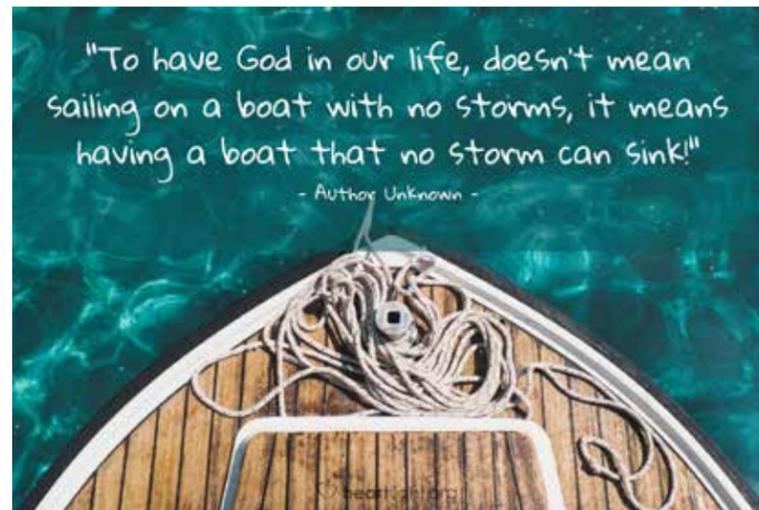
CONGRATS to Bonner Elementary Principal, Elizabeth Gomez!

Principal Gomez was honored as the 2025 Hispanic Business Alliance Outstanding Professional of the year!



NOAH Fund

Your support of the NOAH fund helped an elderly church member, who lives on a very strict fixed income, pay her rent on time when funds were delayed due to the recent government shutdown. While this funding helped with a very tangible need, it also helped ease anxiety during an uncertain time.



CHRISTMAS JOY

Christmas Joy was held Dec. 3 and 4. 115 families invited were served; representing 208 kids; 624 presents wrapped; 82 scooters given along with 208 stuffed animals; 208 filled home sewn stockings; 82 family gifts, close to 50 Marvin Advent devotional books taken, countless prayers, thank you's and smiles given and received by hundreds of volunteers. See pics on page 8!

2026 Mission Trip Opportunities

Texas Hill Country Mission Trip
Sunday, March 8–Thursday, March 12
 (leave Sunday after church and come back Thursday afternoon)

Join us as we demonstrate what it means to be the hands, feet, and hearts of Jesus to a community still rebuilding their livelihoods. This is a great service opportunity for people of all ages and abilities. We will fellowship, help families rebuild their homes, businesses, work with other local churches and ministries, and remind them of the hope they have in Jesus.

Northern Japan
Wednesday, May 27–Friday, June 5

Help us put on a VBS for tweens and teens with the Adair family in Japan. No Japanese required! Just a willingness to love on American children navigating the realities of being a missionary kid in a foreign country.

Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Sunday, June 21–Tuesday, June 30

Help us put on a VBS for the children of Tanzania during their summer break with Alfred Njau and the Amazing Grace Church. We will dance, sing, eat new foods, color, teach bible stories, dance some more, stay in ocean side cabins, and share the joy of the Lord with our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. Help us in helping Alfred and his church reignite their faith in light of the past court cases that still continue on.

South Texas Saturday
Sept. 5–Tuesday, Sept. 8

Join us as we travel to South Texas to partner with one of our missionary couples, Sonya and Gabriel Leal, in serving the local church, local food banks, and the local ministries they partner with to bring hope and relief to those living on the border.

Contact Adam Kovach (akovach@marvin.church) if you are interested in any of the above listed mission trip opportunities, have questions, or would like more information.

Fresh 5k/15k Race on Saturday, March 7

We're trying something new for community outreach! We're looking for Marvin walkers, joggers, and runners who are interested in participating in the Fresh 5k or 15k race put on by Brookshire Grocery on Saturday, March 7! We're looking to form a Marvin team of as many people as possible, of all ages and paces, to flood the course with our presence so that everyone that is out there knows that Marvin loves, cares for, and runs Tyler. Last year there were over 5,000 participants and not a single church sponsor- help us change that narrative. There might even be custom Marvin shirts! If interested, contact Adam (akovach@marvin.church) for more details or questions.



MEMORIALS as of Dec. 3

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ETERNAL FLAME | In honor of Jacob Joiner |
| In memory of Alma Hinkle | In honor of Brandy Stevens |
| In memory of Jeanette Jarrell | In honor of Marvin Missions Ministry |
| Linda Armstrong | Betsy Adams |
| In memory of Chris Andrews | In memory of Dorothy Mae Byerly |
| Carol & Jerry Hopkins | In memory of Terry Jost |
| In memory of Dorothy Mae Byerly | Deanna Olson |
| Seekers Class | |
| MISSIONS | MUSIC |
| In honor of Gina & Doug Baker | In memory of Mary O. Hunnicutt Garcia |
| In honor of Leanne & Marc Donaldson | Deanna Olson |
| In honor of Laura & Gerry Giles | |

 **Habits of the Heart: January**
 Peanut butter and jelly benefiting PATH food bank.

 **Serve Night Monday, Jan. 26, 6 p.m.**
 (A week later due to MLK holiday) Assemble food kits for area food banks.

 **Sweets for the Soul, Jan. 12**
 Make baked goodies for Hospice of East Texas. For info, contact Kenley at kmoore@marvin.church.

CHRISTMAS JOY



STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Danielle Strain



We all have a story to tell. Within Marvin Methodist Church, there are many stories to be found not only in the church as whole, but within each and every ministry and member. For the last year and half, Danielle Strain has helped to tell the story of Marvin Methodist Church, and everything that happens within the church.

After 12 years in education and corporate communications, she joined the church staff as the Communication Coordinator. When reflecting on being hired at Marvin, she wholeheartedly believes that "God was working behind the scenes to make it all possible." On a daily basis you will find Danielle working on bulletins, updating the church website, scheduling weekly email blasts and social media posts, snapping photos on Sunday mornings, helping to coordinate internal and external communications, and communicating the story of the members and ministries of Marvin. Danielle is passionate about communication and sharing the message of faith and fellowship with both the members of the church and the broader community in meaningful and engaging ways.

Ventures Off To Nacogdoches

The Oldest City In Texas



Come join us on Feb. 17, 2026, for a trip down south to historic Nacogdoches on the Old Spanish Road (OSR).

We will begin our day at Millard's Crossing Historical Village just north of the city for a guided tour of one of the area's most popular stops.

Then off to lunch at Auntie Pasta's Italian Restaurant in the heart of the old city.

Then afterwards we'll stop at the Old Stone Fort Museum on the campus of Stephen F. Austin University - a 1936 replica of a circa 1779 structure erected by Nacogdoches militia commander Antonio Gil Y'Barbo.

Contact Kenley Moore at kmoore@marvin.church to sign up.

Danielle and her husband Jake moved from the panhandle of Oklahoma to Tyler in February 2023. Upon arriving in Tyler, they were in search of a church home. They planned to visit several churches, but after one visit to Marvin Methodist Church and meeting Ms. Emily Smith, they knew there was no need to visit any other churches. She was a member at the church for several months before God's plan unfolded and she was hired as a staff member. Danielle loves that she gets to be a part of so many aspects of the church as both a member and a staff member.

Wherever you find Danielle, you will also find Jake. They enjoy experiencing life together, especially being outdoors, working on puzzles, going to the gym, running road races, taking care of their golden retriever (Gilson), and collecting memories rather than things.

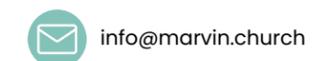
Something that most may not know about Danielle is that she and Jake were married in the chapel of Marvin Methodist Church by Rev. Jacob Joiner and that they are expecting their first child in March 2026.

Financial update through November

	Sept. budget	Sept. actual	YTD budget	YTD actual
Gifts received/other income	\$ 341,000	\$ 411,683	\$ 3,751,000	\$ 3,934,312
Expenditures	\$ 383,718	\$ 379,656	\$ 4,679,414	\$ 4,369,158
Excess/(shortage)	\$ (42,718)	\$ 32,027	\$ (928,414)	\$ (434,846)

Attendance

Nov. 2	940
Nov. 9	835
Nov. 16.....	835
Nov. 23.....	867
Nov. 30	778



Discipleship in Action

The Marvin Student Ministry was BUSY up through Thanksgiving Break! A particular highlight of the month was Hadley Kate Doran and Vivian Havard leading a Bible Study at the Hubbard Middle School Bible Club. One of the central themes from John 3 that they taught on was that "we need to love people like Jesus even if we think they don't deserve it."

It's such a cool thing to see students lead other students! This is evangelism and discipleship in action. All of us can learn from this; we all have friends that need Jesus or that need to be discipled so they can be more like Jesus... but sometimes it's hard to bring up. Sometimes sharing Jesus or doing something like teaching requires boldness and maybe even some awkwardness (if you've taught before, you get it). So, with that said, what are some things God is calling YOU to do that may not feel comfortable or maybe even awkward?

We love to see our students lead and set examples! We have more students leading at Hubbard in the coming months!

Side note: All of the students in this picture were from Marvin and all go to Hubbard Middle School Bible Club!



Student Christmas Party



Widow's Christmas Luncheon



Baby's First Christmas



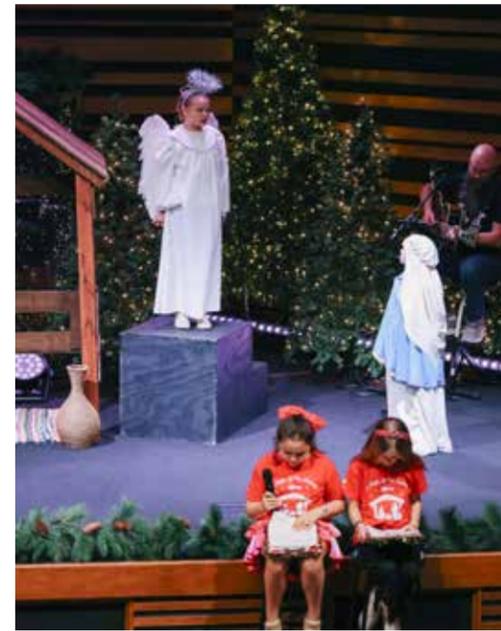
Handbell Concert





We can't wait for a new year of ministry and fun with our Marvin Kids and families, but we want to celebrate the great joy that was shared at our seventh annual Night at the Nativity on December 14. Sixty-five of our kids shared the nativity story through a touching portrayal under the direction of Angela Jennings. The Celebration Choir sang, kids dressed in costumes, a team of fourth and fifth graders led, the cutest little stable animals (preschoolers) made sounds, and a real-life baby Jesus lay in the manger!

Following the nativity story, our families shared a meal, carols, crafts and Christmas goodies with the residents and staff of Breckenridge Village, a residential community for individuals with special needs. Pirtle Hall was filled with meaningful fellowship and it's a highlight for us all to be together at this event each year! We are blessed to share a meal with our Breckenridge Village friends and Marvin Kids families! A huge thank you to all who served with this event! We look forward to a new year of ministry as we see Jesus work in powerful ways in our lives!





MARVIN
Methodist Church

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Tyler, TX

Welcome to Marvin



Debra Everett
Harmony Ball



Amber Glass



Drew, Kate,
Cooper & Jake Starnes



Travis, Cheryl, Dean
& Hayes Pierce



MUSIC

Thank You

The Traditional Music Department wants to extend their heartfelt gratitude for your generous donations throughout the year. Your support plays a vital role in helping us sustain our mission of producing high quality musical offerings. Your commitment to giving not only facilitates our work but also inspires others to contribute. Thanks to your generosity, we are able to host productions like Handel's *Messiah*. Once again, thank you for your kindness and continued support. We are truly grateful for your partnership, and we look forward to sharing future concerts with you.

BLOOD DRIVE

Sunday, Jan. 18
9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Pirtle Hall

Are you ready to make a difference in the lives of your neighbors? This is a fast, easy, and convenient way to give. One donation can save three lives. Go to carterbloodcare.org to schedule an appointment. Photo ID required.

