

THE TOWER MONTHLY

LOVELY LANE | BALTIMORE CITY STATION

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Lovely Lane United Methodist Church

MOTHER CHURCH OF
AMERICAN METHODISM



2200 Saint Paul Street
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Worship Online 11:00 AM

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10 AM — 4 PM

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From the Pastor's Desk: *Singing is Good for the Soul*

Susan Preston shared her musings with us about how important hymns were to her, being able to pluck them out on the piano, especially in this time of physical distancing when we can't be in worship singing the great hymns of our faith. Have you noticed how many are turning to music and the arts for comfort and support during this time of isolation? The Wesley brothers were great hymn writers, a way to express their theology in singable tunes. I often turn to a contemporary hymn writer to make sense of what is going on around us.

Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette grew up in a family that was and continues to be active in the United Methodist Church. She remembers being a very small child and standing on the pew next to her parents and brother in worship, holding a hymnal (before she could even read it), and trying to sing along as the congregation sang the beloved hymns of the Christian faith. Her father was a college English professor until he retired, and both her father and her mother encouraged her to love language and writing.

Carolyn started writing hymn texts in 1998 while attending Synod School, a summer church conference of the Synod of the Trinity of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Her husband Bruce has offered plenty of encouragement and support for her hymn writing, and the two have enjoyed working together to share Carolyn's hymns with others both close to home and around the world.

Carolyn's hymns have been sung by congregations in every state of the USA and in many other countries. Noel Paul Stookey of "Peter, Paul and Mary" made a music video with Emmy winner Pete Staman of Carolyn's hymn, "O God, Our Words Cannot Express," which was written on September 11th. *When We Face an Unknown Future*, written for our current pandemic, sung to BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D ("God Whose Giving Knows No Ending"), summarizes how many of us are feeling. May we find comfort in our hymns of faith, both old and new, until we can sing together again. Grace and Peace, Rev. Debbie Scott

*When we face an unknown future that we can't imagine yet,
when the closeness we have treasured turns from blessing into threat —
As we miss our friends and loved ones, as we crave community, may we look, God,
in this season, for a whole new way to be.*

*Jesus faced the lonely desert as a time to look within.
There he met such trial and conflict; there he knew you were with him. In this time
of separation when we miss the life we've known, may we hear your voice proclaiming:
"I am here! You're not alone."*

*May we cherish those around us as we never have before.
May we think much less of profit; may we learn what matters more.
May we hear our neighbors' suffering; may we see our neighbors' pain.
May we learn new ways of offering life and health and hope again.*

*God, when illness comes to threaten, and when so much here goes wrong,
may we know this thing for certain — that your love is sure and strong.
You're beside us in our suffering — and when times are surely tough,
we may face an unknown future, but it's filled, Lord, with your love.*

From the Lay Leader...

One summer a few years ago, I was shopping at a popular chain store. In the sporting goods aisle, I moved aside some boxes on an upper shelf looking for a new bike inner tube – and out rolled a pink plastic Easter Egg; complete with a chocolate kiss still inside. I guess someone had gotten a little too clever with an employee egg hunt, and this little treat had gone unfound for three months.

Easter doesn't usually hang around that long. Usually the candy is eaten and the baskets are put away by Monday night, and it's back to the grind.

Certainly, for the followers of Jesus, the days after the crucifixion must have been almost unbearably empty. The previous three years had been devoted to following this charismatic miracle-worker. The Christ had told them to leave everything and follow him. Suddenly he was gone to a place where "you cannot follow me now." What are followers to do with no one to follow?

Immediately after his resurrection, Christ says an odd thing. When Mary, overjoyed to see him again, tries to embrace him he says (with some variance in translations), "Do not hold onto to me, for I have not yet ascended..." It's a strange moment of distancing in an otherwise joyous story. And when we read the story every Easter, we tend to speed past it and focus on the "main event." But this peculiar comment bears some thought.

There are various scholarly interpretations of what this means. Often it is thought that because he is in a transitional state – not human yet not divine – it would be dangerous to be in contact with him. Other scholars point out that under Jewish law he would be "unclean" as a corpse, and so Mary should not touch him. Another theory suggests that his recent wounds were still fresh, and it would have been painful for Jesus to have Mary cling to him.

But in the days between this and his ascension, Jesus passes many hours with his former followers, even inviting Thomas to touch his wounds.

I'm not a Bible scholar, but none of these explanations feel meaningful to me. For me, this has always been a more personal moment between Jesus and someone who loved him as a teacher and leader on earth. I believe that Jesus knew that Mary, like many of his followers, would be tempted to "hold on to him." To not let go of the flesh-and-blood Jesus and the dream of an earthly kingdom.

Jesus needed his followers to move on. He needed them to stop being followers and start being leaders. There was a risk in his resurrection that the disciples would focus on the rising from death, and not attend to the rising from life... the ascension to God.

Rising from death was a great miracle, but it was not the ultimate miracle. Jesus had raised three other people from death already. For Jesus, resurrection from death was only one part of the journey. Resurrection from life into the Kingdom of God was the true victory.

And so, I imagine that Jesus' message to Mary and to all his followers was, "Let me go. Let go of this dream of earthly reward. I have not yet ascended to the Father. But when I do – then you will have something to follow... something to hold on to."

For now, for us, Easter is over. But we cannot hold onto that one day of joy. The journey goes on, and the true victory is yet ahead. We still have places to go, and God asks us to do more than merely follow.

Or, as I learned a few years ago, there are still eggs to be found.

Peace,
John Strawbridge
LAY LEADER



Join us for our Live-Stream Worship

Every Sunday during this time of social-distancing, we are posting a live-stream of Sunday Worship at Lovely Lane to our FaceBook page:
www.FaceBook.com/LovelyLaneChurch

Or

<http://lovelylane.net/>
(Just Click On The Video)

The video will remain available for one week and be replaced by a new service each Sunday.



RESTORATION AND NATIONAL FUND GIVING

The Lovely Lane 21st Century Committee met in early April 2020 to assess the impact of COVID-19 on our envisioned capital project to restore and rehabilitate our beautiful historic building for greater community use. We have adopted a modified phasing structure to the multi-year building project to better assure that the church's short-term operating budget needs are addressed in the context of the potential for reduced philanthropic giving post COVID-19. We are confident that a revised timeline is the best course of action at this juncture; we do not even want to think about shelving this worthwhile project. We believe commitment to the envisioned restoration and rehabilitation work is vital to the church's viable operations in the future.

We continue to be grateful for the ongoing contributions and grant awards we have received towards our 2:1 matching requirement of the \$250,000 capital grant award from the National Fund for Sacred Places (NFSP). As of April 21, 2020, we have raised **\$238,665** (*revised*) in contributions and pledges towards the NFSP \$500,000 matching goal. We are hopeful that other grant applications in the pipeline will receive awards by July 2020 to help us meet our required match.

We have received funds from the following donors since we published a listing in the March 2020 Tower edition:

IRA Custodian for Alfred C. Jones IMO Levin and Zeanett Bohenn Jones
 & IHO Lena Leone
 Michael Rouse
 Dorothea Beall Lankford IMO Dolores Shaw
 Lenore Baier IMO Dolores Shaw
 Mary Hughes Kendrick
 Upper Room Ministries
 Wayne Cleaver IMO Dolores Shaw
 Middendorf Foundation

For more information about how you can help us realize the goals of the NFSP-launched project to restore and rehabilitate our beautiful building, please email lovelylanecenter@gmail.com or call the church at 410-889-1512.



Till further notice, we expect to be closed until May 15th.



Dear Friend,

In recent days the term "essential workers" has taken on a whole new meaning. Our governor even declared the Easter Bunny an essential worker. We are so grateful for the many, from Doctors and Nurses to truck drivers and grocery store stockers that are risking it all for the sake of others. I read this piece as I was preparing for Easter; it certainly gives us food for thought.

Rev. Deb

Essential Workers at the Cross

APRIL 7, 2020 BY KATYANDTHEWORD

Who was essential at the cross?

Not Peter or John, Matthew or Mark.

Simon was essential: when Jesus could no longer carry the cross, Simon, a common laborer, with the strength to do the manual labor, the construction, the carrying of an essential item to where it needed to be. Simon was essential.

So were the two criminals who hung by the cross. Worthless and killed for being heretics, these two were essential for having the existential and theological conversation about who was saved and who wasn't, and when was it too late to be saved.

The Centurion, and the common prison guards, were essential, they were the first to realize Jesus was the Son of God after he died. These workers in prison were essential.

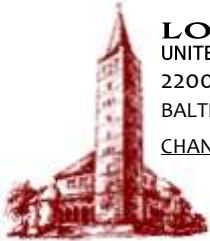
Joseph of Arimathea, was essential. He gave up his own burial place, and risked his own death by the officials, boldly asking Pilate for the body, revealing what he believed and why. Then Joseph and Nicodemus polluted themselves—wrapping the dead body with their own hands, and using Nicodemus own mixed spices to move Jesus to the tomb. These men who put down politics to work with the dead were essential.

The women were essential. The women were sent, because they were thought to be harmless. Women prepared Jesus for the tomb with the wrappings and the spices to hide the bad smell. They entered the grave, where the guards watched—socially distant—to make certain no mischief was done. Women were the worthless but essential workers of the day.

Who was essential at the cross? Who did the work that needed to be done? Who carried, cleaned, buried, wept, wrapped and worshipped?



OUR MISSION: To celebrate the vision of God’s Good News in Jesus Christ in liturgy, learning, and life, through the revitalization of our congregation, the restoration of our building, and the strengthening of our traditions, while recognizing our unique presence and mission in Baltimore City.



LOVELY LANE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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Organization
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TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
THANK YOU FOR PROMPT DELIVERY!

Isolation Well-Being

- ◇ Shower
- ◇ Medication
- ◇ Drink Water
- ◇ Clean One Thing/Space
- ◇ Tend Something Growing/Living
- ◇ Be Mindfully Present To . . .
 - ◆ A Sound or Song
 - ◆ A Sensory Feeling
 - ◆ Something You See
 - ◆ A Spiritual Practice
- ◇ Reach Out To a Human Outside Your Home
- ◇ Do One Thing To Get Your Heart Rate Up
- ◇ Do One Thing You’ll Be Glad You Did Later
- ◇ Do One Thing Just Because You Want To
- ◇ Get in At Least One Good Laugh

Prayer has not been cancelled.

Conversations have not been cancelled.

Kindness has not been cancelled.

Reading has not been cancelled.

Music has not been cancelled.

Worship, as a way of life, has not been cancelled.

Hope has not been cancelled.

**EMBRACE ALL THE GOOD
THAT REMAINS!**