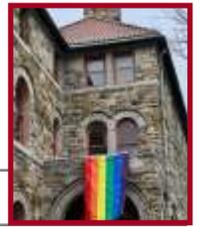


THE TOWER MONTHLY

LOVELY LANE | BALTIMORE CITY STATION

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 2

October 2020



Lovely Lane United Methodist Church

MOTHER CHURCH OF
AMERICAN METHODISM



2200 Saint Paul Street
Baltimore MD 21218-5805

Worship Online 11:00 AM

Office Hours
Monday — Friday
10 AM — 4 PM

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410-889-1512

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PASTOR EMERITA
Rev. Nancy Nedwell

SEXTON
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ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Shanna Webb



From the Pastor's Desk: We Are Being Stretched



We are being stretched and forced to think outside the box as the pandemic, caused by Covid-19, requires us to do our ministry and life in general in different ways. Someone once said, "You will never know where God is taking you unless you are first willing to leave where you are."

In my wildest dreams, I never thought I would perform a virtual Baptism. But I have to tell you that I had a huge smile on my face after the service Sunday because it felt so right. As Paul Harvey would say, here's the rest of the story.

I was Amanda's pastor while I was serving at North Bethesda UMC. She was in the Navy stationed at USUHS, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, on the campus of Bethesda Naval Hospital (now Walter Reed National Military Medical Center). Amanda was studying for a Ph.D. in Psychology to become a psychologist. Our church became her home away from home. She joined the choir, a gifted vocalist, developed a quartet of women for special music, and was a brilliant, sparkling soloist. I would often care for her dog, NOLA, when she was on long duty days. I was proud to join her parents at her graduation at DAR Constitution Hall.

Amanda has since served in Norfolk, Japan, on an aircraft carrier, Camp Lejeune (attached to the Marines), and now is serving in San Diego using her training to select Navy Seals as well as seeing Navy patients in need of psychological support. When her daughter Nora Grace was born, we talked about her baptism, and Amanda decided she would wait until she arrived in San Diego and establish herself in a new church family. She arrived there on March 15th just as everything was closing down for Covid-19.

It was becoming clear that churches were not going to be opening anytime soon, so she asked if we could do something online, especially since the Navy did not want her or other personnel traveling. I had to think for a moment, seminary had not prepared me for such a moment as this, but this was a God moment.

We did the Baptizoom, as one of the attendants called it with great joy. Mom and the Godfather, Steve, were in San Diego using a shell for the water from one I picked up this summer at the beach and blessed and sent to her. Nora's grandparents were in the sanctuary of Lovely Lane, along with the three other members of the women's quartet who sang Child of Blessing.



Amanda's sister and daughter joined us from the Netherlands; other family members and friends joined from Ohio, New Jersey (the Godmother's), Bethesda, and



all parts in between. This sort of presence would not have been possible without Zoom. All had the service ritual in hand and responded as the congregation who would support and nurture Nora Grace as she grew in the Christian faith.

John and I sat in the office when everyone had left and agreed this felt like one of the most normal things we have done in worship in a long time. It was truly about God's blessing on this precious child, and we just got out of the way. We need to get out of God's way more often. "We never know where God is taking us unless we are first willing to leave where we are." May it be so!!

Blessings,
Rev. Debbie Scott

RESTORATION AND NATIONAL FUND FOR SACRED PLACES (NFSP) GIVING

We are awaiting final determination of the amount of our capital grant award from NFSP. Our application requested the full \$250,000 award based on our successful progress to date to reach the 2:1 match and complete architectural drawings to launch the first phase of construction. Stay tuned!

We received word in early September that the Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP) organization received a bundled capital grant award from the State of Maryland of \$1 million grant into their Arts & Entertainment Fund. CBP has notified us that our project to create the Lovely Lane Arts & Neighborhood Center in our building--located within the boundaries of the CBP service area--will receive \$150,000 in additional grant support from this bundled capital grant. This is a true sign of growing community support for our restoration and rehabilitation project.

Here is the listing of funding support we have received since we published a listing in the September 2020 Tower edition:

Michael and Susan Ford Charitable Gift Fund
State of Maryland Bond Initiative Grant to Central Baltimore Partnership
Eleanor Packard IMO Donald Conklin
Michael P. Rouse

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.



Our Charge Conference will be by zoom this year, Oct. 18th, at 1:00 pm with three other churches. You will need to register in order to attend:

Church Conference Registration: A detailed registration is required so that the district office can appropriately prepare for participants. The registration is via Google Forms and will allow for a registrant to add up to 10 additional people to their registration form. **It is critically important to register if you wish to participate (this includes clergy); the Zoom information will ONLY be sent to registrants.** To ensure a smooth transition to the breakout rooms, we kindly ask that registration information not be shared with those who have not registered. Click the following link to register: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf9JjOezVu287vr5Uloh4Vk0DbAPgzn_KoONqdis7ssJA36NA/viewform?usp=sf_link.

Lovely Lane UMC is still closed, but if you would like to worship in person, please call Rev Deb.

From the Lay Leader...

Does God make blueberry pies?

There are a lot of questions about God. Questions enough to keep generations of theologians busy. Why does God allow evil to exist? How can the Christ be flesh and yet be God? If God can do anything can God make a stone so heavy that God can't lift it? But despite all the unanswerable questions that could occupy my brain, it is this question about a divine desert that has kept me guessing for years.

Specifically, did God make a blueberry pie in Catonsville in late spring of 1979? You see, that was the claim of a woman in my church when I was young. She told us how one day she had unexpected guests. Being a good hostess, she scrambled and put together some kind of dinner to server to her visitors. But she just didn't have the time to make a dessert. That's when she looked out on her back porch, and found a blueberry pie sitting there. She was sure God had sent an angel who put that pie there for here.

I admit, I didn't think too highly of her story. I found it hard to believe that God – the same God who raised up mountains and delivered the Israelites to the promised land – was taking time out of His busy schedule to make baked goods for suburban suppers. In fact, I always kind hoped God had better things to do than roll flaky crusts.

But I have to admit, that as silly as I took it to be, the story of God sending pie to the mildly inconvenienced has stayed with me. And I guess that now I can reflect on it in a different light.

I still don't think this was a major miracle; a flash of lightning and the sound of angelic trumpets and suddenly, where none was before; Let There Be Pie. But I don't discount the possibility that the angel who delivered the pie was not a celestial creature but maybe was a neighbor. A neighbor who had enough to make two pies, and felt moved to share with her friend. And though her need was not desperate, the

woman from my church felt gratitude – and recognized that God had been generous, and had blessed her with a life of plenty. Maybe she felt moved to witness to her gratitude for what God had done in her life. Maybe one day one of those Sunday School students would share the story with his grown-up congregation. And maybe some of them will be moved to share their own witnesses of God's blessings.

The Bible is full of stories of God acting as a thunderbolt. But life is much more full of God acting as a gentle breeze... a drop of rain... a reflection of light. Parting the Red Sea is amazing, but how much more amazing is it that someone's extra blueberries could still be testifying to God's blessings over forty years later, and to people far removed.

There are times too numerous to count when I feel like God has blessed me in small and seemingly silly ways. Ways that seem much to meager to be the work of the Author of Life. Yet I believe - as surely as the woman believed that God sent her a blueberry pie - that God has provided for me. Big, important things. But also lots of trivial things. And I think it is important that I remember that.

Not one sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge. Nor one pie, shared between friends.

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.

The United Methodist Women

In 2019, The United Methodist Women celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the establishment of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. This organization would see several name changes, and since 1968, has been called the United Methodist Women. To celebrate their Anniversary and help provide for the continuation of the work they do worldwide, a Legacy Fund was established, with the hope of raising \$60M. They are half-way there. Our Lovely Lane United Methodist Women have donated \$500 to the Legacy Fund in memory of Dorothy Krug. Dorothy was active in UMW all her life and served as President for at least 25 years. In addition to sharing the Gospel, the UMW provides medical care, education, and opportunities for economic independence for children, young people, and women throughout the globe.

An Ocean of Grief By Rev. Patricia Templeton

In light of over 200,000 lost to COVID-19, I found this very powerful (Rev Deb)

Two hundred thousand. Two hundred thousand people. Two hundred thousand deaths. Two. Hundred. Thousand.

That is the number of deaths from the coronavirus we reached in this country this weekend, or we should say that is the official death count. Public health experts say the reality is many more than that.

Two hundred thousand deaths. I've been trying to get my head around that number. It's as if the entire population of Augusta, or Montgomery, or Chattanooga were wiped out. Every inhabitant dead. Every life extinguished.

When I was a hospice chaplain we held a memorial service twice a year to read the names of our patients who had died. There were usually about 600 names. Reading them aloud took a long time.

So how long would it take to read aloud the name of every person who has died from the coronavirus in this country in the last six months?

Every year on September 11 the names of all who died in the terrorist attacks on that date are read aloud at the 9/11 Memorial in New York. It takes a little longer than three hours to read slightly fewer than 3,000 names.

So let's estimate an hour to read 1,000 names (although it probably takes longer). That means 200 hours to say each name aloud. Or put another way, eight days and eight hours, nonstop, no breaks. That's 200,000 names.

Each of those names represents a life that is lost, a hole in the fabric of the lives of parents, grandparents, children, spouses, siblings, friends, communities.

Two hundred thousand deaths means an ocean of grief washing over our country.

And yet it is possible to go through our days without encountering that grief. That is in part because the pandemic has robbed us of our rituals of mourning. Responsible congregations are not holding in-person services, including funerals, or if they are the number attending is limited. And those who have lost a family member or friend to this virus know it is no hoax, know that they must protect themselves and others from this horrific plague. So they all too often are grieving in isolation, cut off from others who might be with them through the pain.

In other tragedies we have had national days of mourning, and have looked to our leaders to speak the pain the nation feels, to help provide comfort and solace.

I think of Ronald Reagan speaking eloquently after the Challenger shuttle explosion, of Bill Clinton speaking after the Oklahoma City bombing, of George W. Bush trying to bring the nation together after the 9/11 attacks, of Barack Obama singing Amazing Grace at a service for those massacred in Charleston.

Those services did not erase the grief, but it helped to share it, to acknowledge that we are one people who feel each other's pain, who mourn for and with one another, even if we did not know the people who died.

"In every death we encounter something of us dies," theologian Paul Tillich wrote, "and in every disease something of us tends toward disintegration.

"There is an ultimate unity of all beings rooted in the divine life from which they emerge and to which they return," he says.

What happens to one affects us all.

Yet in this tragedy, with numbers climbing ever higher, there has been no day of mourning. There have been few, if any, words of solace or comfort or grief from our leaders.

"It is what it is," we are told.

In his book *Reality, Grief, Hope*, Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann looks at the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the words of the prophets as they tried to make meaning of the disaster. The leaders of Jerusalem, ensconced in a life of privilege and power, denied the reality of what was happening around them and of what the future held.

They, Brueggemann says, lived in a "constructed, contained view of reality that covers over the facts on the ground and offers us instead a preferred set of facts that reassures and confirms the way we thought and wished the world were."

Such ways of thinking "will not be interrupted by facts, for facts are characteristically 'inconvenient,'" he says. "As a consequence, the facts on the ground must be denied."

That is what the prophet Jeremiah is referring to when he says of the leaders of the nation, "They have healed my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

Jeremiah could be talking to us today.

We have been told the coronavirus is a hoax, that it is like the sniffles or a mild flu, that it will miraculously disappear, that numbers of deaths and cases are inflated, that children are almost immune to it, that masks are not necessary, that we've turned the corner, that a vaccine is imminent, that it is safe to resume our lives.

None of which is true. All deliberate lies.

Serious illnesses, loss of livelihoods, and tens of thousands of deaths have been virtually unacknowledged, while our leaders cry "Peace" when there is no peace.

Brueggemann says that the church has two principle tasks in times such as these.

The first is "to practice grief in the face of denial by truth telling."

"The prophetic task, amid a culture of denial, is to embrace, model, and practice grief, in order that the real losses in our lives be acknowledged," he says.

That means we tell the truth about what is happening. We acknowledge that thousands have likely died needlessly because of the negligence of our leaders. We hold them accountable and responsible for the care of the nation. We demand that the 200,000 lives that have been lost be remembered, grieved, and honored.

We also acknowledge as real and valid all the other griefs evoked by this pandemic -- the illnesses, the loss of livelihoods, the isolation, the loss of community, ritual, and routine. All of us have experienced loss in the last six months, loss that is deep and real.

Scripture speaks to such loss.

"My soul is bereft of peace;" we hear in the Book of Lamentations. "I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, 'Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the Lord.'"

Brueggemann notes that the church today, like the culture around us, tends to avoid laments and loss. The temptation to paper over it, to cry "Peace" when there is no peace, is real.

But we must do so if we are to move forward.

Which brings us to the church's second task in such times, which Brueggemann says is "to practice hope in the face of despair by promise-telling."

This is hope that is grounded in reality. Not wishful thinking that the virus will one day magically disappear, but hope that acknowledges the truth, the grief, the loss of our situations, and courageously says that this is not the final word.

This is hope that God is with us and that God will lead us into a future that we are called to imagine.

Brueggemann says the church's task now is to proclaim hope that is a "tenacious act of imagination, grounded in a dream, song, or narrative, rooted in the faithful authority of God."

The church should "dare to speak such a future that is there beyond all evidence."

Martin Luther King did exactly that in his "I Have a Dream" speech given in 1963 when segregation, Jim Crow, and restricted voting rights were still the law of the land. King did not deny that reality, but urged us to look beyond it to a new day when those realities would be defeated and we would all be closer to God's dream for humankind.

And then he called us to do the hard work it took to move forward, with the assurance that God is with us.

In the same way we acknowledge the reality of our situation today, the truths of inequity that have been uncovered by this virus, and dream of the better, more just world to which God is calling us.

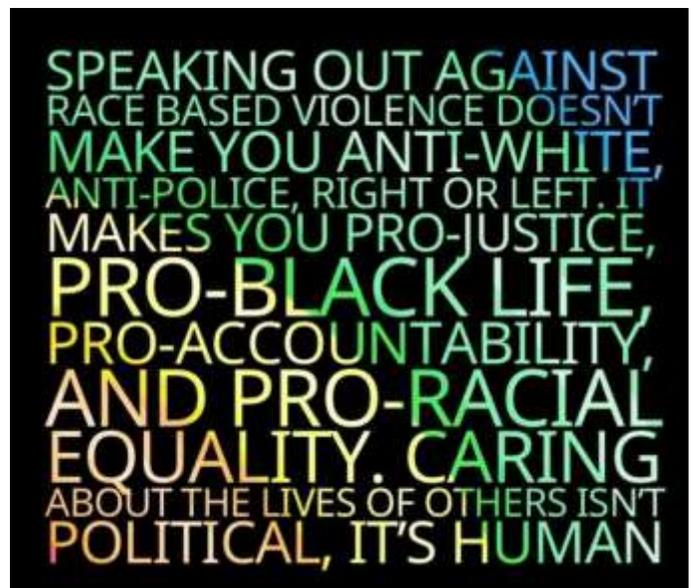
But today we grieve.

We weep as Jesus wept at the death of a friend he loved.

We mourn what we have lost, what our nation has lost.

The last verse of our offertory music sums it up well:

O God of love and mercy, we cry to you, 'How long?'
In troubled times remind us: Your love is ever strong.
Now as we grieve the suffering, Lord, show us how to
be a healing, loving presence in our community.
Amen.

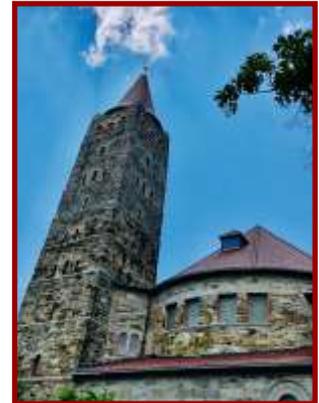


OUR MISSION: To celebrate the vision of God’s Good News in Jesus Christ in liturgy, learning, and life, through the revitalization of our congregation, the restoration of our building, and the strengthening of our traditions, while recognizing our unique presence and mission in Baltimore City.



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THANK YOU FOR PROMPT DELIVERY!



Want to start a new family tradition that will teach your kids about thankfulness? Every night for the month of October, gather as a family, and add a few items to your Thankful Pumpkin! You'll have a beautiful Thanksgiving decoration!

^Is it too early to talk pumpkins?!? We're ready for autumn!!!!



Please vote Nov 3rd or before and tell them Ruth sent you! Thank you for your years of faithful service
Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg!