

THE TOWER MONTHLY

LOVELY LANE | BALTIMORE CITY STATION



Lovely Lane United Methodist Church

MOTHER CHURCH OF
AMERICAN METHODISM



2200 Saint Paul Street
Baltimore MD 21218-5805

Worship
Sundays 11:00 AM

Office Hours
Tuesday - Friday
9:00 AM — 3:00 PM

Phone
410-889-1512

Email
admin@lovelylane.net

Website
LovelyLane.net

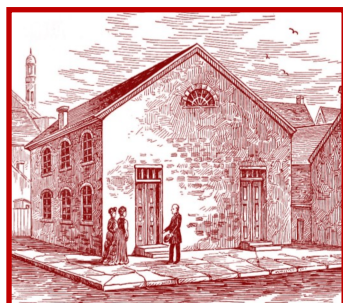
PASTOR
Rev. Levon Sutton
revsutton@lovelylane.net

LAY LEADER
John Strawbridge

ORGANIST
Bill Scanlan Murphy

PASTOR EMERITUS
Rev. Emora Brannan

SEXTON
Ivan Reyes



From the Pastor's Desk: September Pastoral Letter

"A Season to Return, Renew, and Rejoice"

Dear Lovely Lane Family,

As summer's warmth slowly softens and the air carries the subtle scent of change, we enter September, a month of thresholds and quiet invitations. It is a time to pause, to take stock, and to return—not only to the routines of life but to the sacred rhythms of faith that shape our days and sustain our spirits.

In the familiar patterns of worship, prayer, and fellowship, there is profound grace. There is a sacred pulse that calls us back to God, whispering to our hearts: *"Come, and remember who you are. Come, and find life in Me."* It is here, in these steady rhythms, that faith is renewed, hope is restored, and the soul finds rest.

Take a moment this September to look inward. Reflect on the summer behind you—the joys, the travels, the quiet moments of laughter, and the simple pleasures that often go unnoticed. And do not shy away from the challenges: the struggles faced, the burdens carried, the prayers uttered in private, perhaps even unanswered. Each of these experiences is part of God's intricate tapestry in your life, woven with threads of patience, growth, and grace. In reflection, the ordinary becomes holy, and every moment becomes an opportunity to see God's hand guiding, comforting, and sustaining.

Consider this month your spiritual "back-to-school." Like a child returning with wonder to a classroom full of lessons, we are invited to approach God with curiosity, humility, and openness. Each morning brings a fresh page, each conversation a new insight, each act of service a living scripture.

Growth does not only emerge in grand gestures but in the faithful steps we take, day by day, in love, in prayer, and in communion with one another.

As the leaves prepare their slow descent to the earth, we are reminded of the sacred art of letting go. There are fears, doubts, and old regrets that cling to us, often unnoticed. Yet God calls us to release them, to shed what no longer serves, and to trust in the promise of renewal. For just as the trees will bear new leaves in time, so too will our hearts be refreshed and renewed in God's care.

Step gently into this season, open to the subtle ways God moves. See the divine in the quiet of morning devotion, in the laughter and tears shared with neighbors, in the hands that reach out in service. Rejoice in the constancy of God's love, the sacred rhythms that steady us, and the everyday moments in which God's grace quietly works within and around us.

September is not merely a month; it is a spiritual invitation. It is an opportunity to return with intention, to renew with purpose, and to rejoice with fullness of heart. Let us embrace this season with eyes wide open, hearts receptive, and spirits ready to encounter the living God in all things.

"Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your garments." – Joel 2:12

With gratitude and peace,

Reverend Levon D. Sutton
Pastor, Lovely Lane UMC

THE TOWER MONTHLY

From the Lay Leader...

September 2025



The sign said "Free."

I'd been wanting a bike for years. I had a bike before, but it had been stolen from my yard not long after I moved into my house. So I had done without. Even though my neighborhood had an excellent bike trail that began at the end of my street and wound up through the park, around the reservoir, and past the zoo. I wanted a bike, but didn't think it was a luxury I should be spending my limited money on.

Now, as I was walking home from the store, here stood exactly the kind of bike I wanted. An adult men's ten-speed trail bike... perched upright on its kickstand on a neighbor's front walk. The handwritten sign taped to the handlebars made the owner's intentions clear: "Free."

I looked over the bike for several minutes. It was perfect. Then, with some reluctance, I turned and resumed my walk home. My brain tried to rationalize as I walked. "Sure, someone had put it out to be taken by anyone that wanted it. But surely, they didn't mean me."

"Probably they meant someone more deserving. Someone needier." I didn't think I deserved to get such a nice thing for free.

In a few blocks I was home. I put my groceries away. But I still thought about the bike. It was nice day. It would be a great day to go for a ride. Maybe try out that trail at the end of the road. But surely someone would have grabbed up that bike by now. "It wasn't meant to be."

But I could still check... it was only a few blocks back up the road. If it was still there, then maybe that would be a sign that it was meant to be.

I walked back up the road. Pretty quickly I could

see that it still stood in front of the neighbor's house. Maybe as I made my way closer someone else would come. But no one did. I looked over the bike again. I re-read the sign. Was it that simple? Free? Was there a caveat I missed? Something on the other side? No, it still simply said, "Free." No qualification. No restriction.

Almost hesitantly, I placed my hand on the handlebars. Kicked up the kickstand. I began to walk away with it. I looked around. Was anyone watching? Would anyone try to stop me... or criticize me for taking it? I walked the bike home. I couldn't imagine riding it yet. A few blocks. Then around the corner. Then into my yard. I pulled off the paper sign that said "free." That was it. Now it was my bike.

Mine.

That was maybe fifteen years ago. Maybe more. Now I still wonder at how hard it was for me to accept that such a nice thing was free. To believe that the giver was happy for me to take it. Would be glad to know that I treasured his gift. Why is that? Why are we ever reluctant to accept that which is free?

By now, you've figured out why I'm telling you this story. You know that Salvation is free. That God wants us to take it. He believes we deserve it.

Why do we hesitate? Why do we tell ourselves that surely there are others who need it more... who deserve it more. We already believe. We already have faith. We don't really need this free gift. We think we're being good to let others go ahead of us. We should have to earn it. We should pay for the things we get.

But that's not how God is thinking. God sets no conditions... no limits... no qualifications. The offer really is as simple as the sign says; "Free."

Free for the taking. Free for anyone. You don't even need to ask. Just reach out and take it. It feels almost too good to be true.

Peace,
John Strawbridge
LAY LEADER



WORK TO RESTORE, REHABILITATE AND MAINTAIN OUR 19TH CENTURY BUILDING**MAINTENANCE OF BUILDING/PAST RESTORATION WORK**

The Lovely Lane Restoration Fund balances have been used since May 2025 to make upgrades to boiler equipment to assure efficient heating in the church building.

21ST CENTURY PROJECT UPDATE**Pending Capital Upgrades**

The committee continues to gather pricing for the FEMA grant security upgrades to our building. The upgrades include new key card access for exterior and interior doors, south portico gate hardware, security lighting, door refurbishment and security camera installation.

Currently, the existing basement bath and locker rooms, used by outside groups, have been renovated by Centricity Contracting. New fixtures, finishes, flooring and other improvements are almost complete!

Community Outreach

Our community outreach continues with contracting for an internet-based wedding venue listing service to help spread the news about Lovely Lane's beautiful space for weddings. The committee will revisit the service after a year to determine the effectiveness of the paid service.

GIFT CAMPAIGN

All interested in making donations to help assure 1) increased escrowed balances for future restoration work or 2) capital project completion under the terms of pending grant awards should contact lovelylanecenter@gmail.com for details. Alternatively, please follow the instructions and link given below to make donations to our Building Funds.

BUILDING FUNDS DONOR UPDATE

The Lovely Lane congregation continues to be very grateful for the ongoing support received to 1) to assure the integrity of all past restoration to our 19th Century building built as a centennial monument to the founding of Methodism in the United States in 1784 and 2) pursue our ambitious 21ST Century Project restoration, rehabilitation and building use goals.

We have received the following donations since we published a listing in the **July/August Tower** edition.

The Restoration Fund – to maintain building integrity

Edward & Eileen Bernhoft bequest
William L. Motley
John M. Strawbridge
United Methodist Historical Society of the
Baltimore Annual Conference
Alexandre Zamov
Mary Zober

The 21st Century Building Project Fund – to improve building for greater community use

Linda M. Webb IRA

*To make a new donation to either of our Building Funds,
Please send checks--payable to the church and indicating "Restoration" or
"21st Century Building Project" in the memo line of the check--*

*Mail to: Lovely Lane United Methodist Church,
2200 St. Paul Street,
Baltimore, MD 21218*

Or go to our website to donate online:

<https://lovelylane.net/church-life/donations-offerings>

And click on either the "Restoration Fund" or the "Rehabilitation Capital Campaign Fund" button

Scan the QR code here



To navigate to the donation page

In Community

WORSHIP HOUR CHANGES: Remember we gather for worship at 11:00 AM beginning September 7, 2025. Following worship we will have our Social Hour in Lovely Lane Hall. We look forward to catching up with one another. We have had some very hot Sundays, but the past couple have been lovely. We look forward to more comfortable temperatures in the Sanctuary as we return to 11:00 AM worship.

Host and Hostesses are needed as we begin the fall schedule. You can certainly make it simple. Cups, plates, napkins are supplied. The importance of Social Hour is the fellowship we share with our church family. Perhaps there is someone you have missed and could encourage them to come. Let them know we miss them and will be changing time.

As we approach our Church Conference scheduled in November, there will be meetings of Church Council which will be scheduled and announced. We should also remember our gifts to MANNA House; the groceries are increasing in price for them as well as our own. UMCOR is always in a state of readiness to act for needs wherever they may be. All donations to UMCOR go to the work as administrative cost are covered by various denominational groups. We know the FEMA support for Western Maryland was denied. Perhaps some of our UMCOR monies will go there.

Perhaps you want to say a word of gratitude to Bill Murphy and the choir. They have been hot in the loft, but the music has been meaningful and lovely. Bill should be commended for the use of the wonderful music he has discovered and presented from the 1882 Lovely Lane Choir Book!

*Nancy Brannan,
Church Council Chair*



Welcome to Our New Church Administrator, Avis Smith

Avis Naomi Smith's love of baking began as a child when her mother gave her the original Easy-Bake Oven in 1965. By age eight, she was already preparing full breakfasts for her family, sparking a lifelong passion for food and hospitality.

Known for planning gatherings even in her youth, Avis naturally transitioned into a career as a professional event planner in Washington, DC, later managing conventions at the Baltimore Convention Center. Encouraged by her sister, a chef, she attended culinary college at 40 and graduated in 2002 with dual degrees in Food & Beverage Management and Hotel, Restaurant, and Innkeeping Management. She went on to operate a successful catering business and a 125-seat banquet facility, leading events from weddings to corporate seminars.



In 2018, Avis founded Naomi and Pearl Apple Confections, a bakery inspired by her creativity and commitment to bringing joy through food. What began with candy apples and seven varieties of chocolate chip cookies has grown into a specialty business known for customized image desserts. Her company has received grants from Facebook, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and American Express, and continues to expand with innovative technology like direct-to-food printing. She is a recent graduate of the Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center's Milestone Circles Program, and on August 27, 2025, her face appeared in Times Square on the Nasdaq Billboard. Despite challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Avis remains committed to creating desserts that connect people through shared memories and celebrations.

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**
2200 ST. PAUL STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21218-5805
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Baltimore, MD
Permit No. 6575

(Mailing Address Here)

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
THANK YOU FOR PROMPT DELIVERY!



CALENDAR

Fall/Winter Schedule
Worship 11:00am

Fellowship Hour/Guided Tour
Fellowship Hour: Sundays following worship

Baltimore Folk Music Society
Wednesday, 7 pm Weekly dances in the Lovely Lane Fellowship Hall each Wednesday of every month.

Lovely Lane encourages our members and friends to volunteer on the first Saturday of each month to assist with service around our expansive, beautiful, and historic church.

September Birthdays

- 9/1 Emora Brannan
- 9/4 Angie Ferguson
- 9/6 Patrick Brannan
- 9/9 Simone Sutton
- 9/10 Johnny Olszewski
- 9/13 Eve Gillison
- 9/13 Matt O’Laughlin
- 9/19 Keith Simmers
- 9/23 Quinn Gillison
- 9/26 Ellie O’Laughlin-Spurling
- 9/28 Julia Ewers
- 9/28 Jackie Noller

