

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

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LovelyLane.net

PASTOR
Rev. Levon Sutton
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LAY LEADER
John Strawbridge

ORGANIST
Bill Scanlan Murphy

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SEXTON
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From the Pastor's Desk: April Pastoral Letter

The Life God Requires is the Life Jesus Blesses

Beloved Community,

April carries us through the sacred heart of our faith—through the palms, the table, the cross, and the empty tomb.

We begin with celebration as Jesus enters Jerusalem, not as a ruler of domination, but as a servant of peace. We gather at the table, where love is made tangible through bread and cup. We walk with him through the tension of Holy Week, where love is tested, justice is challenged, and sacrifice is made visible. And we arrive—by grace—at resurrection.

Resurrection is not merely an event to remember; it is a reality to live.

At Lovely Lane, we continue discerning what it means to be a resurrection people in this moment, in this neighborhood, and in this city. We give thanks for the sacred trust of this historic place and the generations who have sustained it. At the same time, we are invited to live ever more fully into a living witness—one that engages, heals, restores, and builds within and beyond these walls.

Resurrection life calls us outward. It calls us into relationship—with God, with one another, and with our neighbors. It calls us into courage—to face what is broken, to name what is unjust, and to participate in God's work of renewal.

This month invites us to ask:

- Where is God calling us to new life?
- What must be released so that some thing greater may rise?
- How are we being sent—not just gathered?

A Devotional Reflection for April

"The Life God Requires is the Life Jesus Blesses."

This is not simply a theme—it is a lens through which we come to see the Gospel more clearly. In the life of Jesus, we discover that what God requires is not performance, but presence. Not perfection, but faithfulness. Not power as the

world defines it, but love that is willing to kneel, to serve, and even to suffer.

Jesus blesses the life that:

- Hungers and thirsts for righteousness
- Extends mercy when it is undeserved
- Seeks peace in the face of conflict

Remains faithful even when the path is costly
This is the life revealed on the road to Jerusalem.

This is the life embodied at the table.

This is the life poured out on the cross.
And this is the life raised in resurrection power. Too often, we are tempted to separate what God requires from what Jesus blesses—as if one is obligation and the other is grace. But in Christ, they are one and the same.

What God requires is not meant to burden us—it is meant to free us.

What Jesus blesses is not meant to be distant—it is meant to be lived.

And so the question becomes not simply what we believe, but how we live:

- Where is God inviting me to embody love more fully?
- What might it look like to choose humility over control?

How might I become an agent of healing in a wounded world?

Resurrection reminds us that this life is possible—not because we are strong, but because God is faithful.

The life God requires is not distant or abstract—it is revealed in the life Jesus blesses: a life of humility, justice, mercy, and love in action.

Let us walk this journey together—not only to Easter, but through Easter and into the life it makes possible.

Grace and Peace,

Reverend Levon D. Sutton
Pastor, Lovely Lane UMC

THE TOWER MONTHLY

From the Lay Leader...

April, 2026

My mother's optometrist has a sign in his exam room that reads, "Only Jesus can make a blind man see." I always wanted to point to the sign and say, "Yes, but you're still going to try, right?" I was encouraged that the doctor was a man of faith, but concerned that he might be giving up too quickly.

Jesus could, indeed, heal the blind. Except for walking on water – which for the sheer "wow" factor wins out – curing the blind may be the miracle we most think of when we think of Jesus. This is not surprising, since it is one of his most frequent. The gospels tell us of eight specific individuals whose blindness was taken away by Christ. And there are other stories where we don't know the details but know that other blind persons were given sight.

These and other miracles are one of the ways the gospels affirm that Jesus was, without doubt, the Son of God. Emanuel. The long-prophesied Messiah. But the miracles of Christ mean comparatively little if they are one-and-done events. Jesus's simple teaching of "Love thy neighbor" has far more impact and longer-lasting resonance than the healing of one or two – or even eight – men who lived thousands of years ago. Or so it might seem.

As breath-taking as the biblical miracles might be, the true importance of these events does not shine in the moment of awe, but hides in shadows of second thought. Each miracle which is recorded and retold teaches a greater lesson. In some cases, a lesson which might take two thousand years to appreciate.

Some years ago, I read an article about medical science trying to catch up with Jesus. There have been advances which have enabled researchers to restore sight to people with damaged or no vision. But it was not the "miracle" of modern medicine that stuck with me. It was a surprising consequence of the procedure. Doctors found that some people with restored sight soon developed a sense of unease or suffered depression.

Even for those who have never experience blindness, the gift of sight is a miracle. The effortless ability to know things which are distant. The com-

plex process of the brain to convert shape and color into tangible concepts... to compare those concepts to a lifetime of previous experience... and to immediately categorize if not absolutely identify those perceptions as familiar people, places, and actions.

But without that lifetime of previous experience, those who are new to sight find the world overwhelming. People they once knew by the sound of their voices are unrecognizable as a face and body... mere shape and color. Is a sunset beautiful? Is the Mona Lisa remarkable? Having not learned to read and interpret the language of sight, the formerly blind may find themselves struggling and feeling inept.

Does this mean the miracle of Jesus healing the blind only goes so far? That we can't read too much into it? Or does this mean that this miracle is far more complex and deeper than we have accepted?

We know that Jesus healing the blind hints at a larger truth; that Christ opens our eyes. Christ reveals to us the kingdom of Heaven. Through Christ we see as if we had been blind before. But we do not need to shy away from the more complex side. Indeed, we dare not.

We should know that the world Christ reveals may trouble us. We may be confused, even depressed, by what we see. Through the lens of Jesus, we may see that the world can be a home for evil. That people we thought we knew may be strangers. We will certainly come to know that we have a lot more to learn to fully understand how to use this gift that Christ has given us.

We need to know this so that we do not turn away. So that we do not reject the gift when it becomes difficult to bear. That it is okay to be sometimes confused and overwhelmed. We need to know that it is normal to ask for help.

It is a fearsome thing to be the recipient of a miracle. Jesus offers vision not to one man... not to eight men... but to all. To you. Accept the miracle. But know that when you enter into Christ's world that things will never look the same. You will see the world through new eyes.

Peace,
John Strawbridge
LAY LEADER



WORK TO RESTORE, REHABILITATE AND MAINTAIN OUR 19TH CENTURY BUILDING FOR GREATER COMMUNITY USE

MAINTENANCE OF BUILDING/PAST RESTORATION WORK

The Lovely Lane Restoration Fund balances have been used since January 2026 to undertake repairs to the fallen plaster in the St. Paul Street entrance vestibule. Additional investigation continues to determine if the snow and frigid temperatures of January has caused additional damage to the tiled roof of that corner of the church building.

21ST CENTURY PROJECT UPDATE

Pending Capital Upgrades

The committee will be reviewing the proposals for the second floor classroom HVAC project this month. In addition, the committee is discussing security projects to implement this year including new key card access, exterior security lighting and other upgrades.

Community Outreach

There continues to be interest in using the church's spaces for community and arts events after the church hosted several events at the end of last year.

GIFT CAMPAIGN

Please consider contributing to one of Lovely Lane's Building Funds. Please follow the instructions and link given below to make donations to our Building Funds.

For more information on how your tax-deductible donations will be put to work in the Restoration Fund (escrowed balances for future restoration work) or in the 21st Century Building Fund (new capital upgrades to our 19th century building for greater community use), please contact us at lovelylanecenter@gmail.com.

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 **March 2026 Tower** edition.

The Restoration Fund – to maintain building integrity

Shakyra Hawkes
Korean Church Group Tour

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

No new donations

*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*





Our Easter Altar



We thank our members and friends for placing
flowers on the Lovely Lane Altar, to Honor and
Remember their Loved Ones.

Lenore Baier

† In memory of †

Daniel Powell Patrick Baier

Raymond & Virginia Lucas

Lorie Henslee

† In honor of †

The Brannon Family

Dan Bailey and Diane Dongarra

† In honor of †

Our Families

† In memory of †

Our Families

Emora & Nancy Brannan

† In memory of †

Our Parents Myrtle & Oliver Brannan

The Rev. Mr. & Mrs. Al R. Crumpler

† In honor of †

Our Children

Our Grandchildren

Henry and Linda Chen

† In honor of †

Emora & Nancy Brannan

Nancy Nedwell

John Strawbridge (for his inspired writing
in the Towerlight)

† In memory of †

Dick Wilson

Adele Daly

Bob Shaw

Beth Glasgow

Dee Shaw

Betsy Fisk

† In memory of †

My husband George

Laura Gamble and Family

† In honor of †

Marvis & Bob Gillison

† In memory of †

Louise & Morris Gamble



Our Easter Altar

We thank our members and friends for placing
flowers on the Lovely Lane Altar, to Honor and
Remember their Loved Ones.



Mr. & Mrs. Richard T. Kircher

†In memory of†

Henry C Eliason

Katherine R. Eliason

Mary R. Eliason Kircher

Carl J. Kircher

C. William Kilmon

†In memory of†

Nadine M. Kilmon

Eleanor H. Kilmon

Linton E. Kilmon

Eleanor K. Doerr

Linton E. Kilmon

Donna Knot

†In memory of†

Don David Conklin

Jackie Noller

†In memory of†

Her Parents Twyla and Bob Noller

Her Husband Robert Castadot

Eleanor Packard, Marian Griffin, Roger & Monika Munn

†In memory of†

Our Loved Ones

Rev. Carl Ford Peterson

†In memory of†

Dolores, Wilton, & Robert Shaw

†In honor of†

Emora & Nancy Brannan

John Strawbridge

Carole Quinan

†In memory of†

Her Parents Alberta L. Conklin & W. LeRoy Conklin

Her Brothers Don D. Conklin & Daniel L. Conklin

Elizabeth Strawbridge

†In honor of†

John Strawbridge

Linda Webb

†In memory of†

My parents Leslie & Viola Meinders

Sacred Journey: A Spring Immersion to Alabama

contributed by Rev. Levon D. Sutton

This spring, approximately twenty-six faculty mentors, students, and guests from **United Theological Seminary** in Dayton, Ohio traveled to Alabama for a week-long pilgrimage through Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery. For those of us journeying as DMin and MDiv students, this was more than a trip. It was a sacred immersion into places where faith, struggle, memory, and justice meet.



Throughout the week, we visited sites that helped bring the history of the Civil Rights Movement into sharper focus. In Birmingham, our journey included **St. John AME Church of the AME 9th Episcopal District**, **Bethel Baptist Church** in Collegeville, the **Birmingham City Jail** where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, **16th Street Baptist Church**, the **Birmingham Civil Rights Institute**, and **Kelly Ingram Park**. Each site revealed something of the courage, suffering, and spiritual strength that shaped the movement.



In Selma, we visited **Brown Chapel AME Church** and walked across the **Edmund Pettus Bridge**. These moments were especially moving. Brown Chapel reminded us of the church's vital role as a gathering place for courage, strategy, and prayer. Walking the bridge invited us to remember the cost of the struggle for voting rights and the determination of those who refused to turn back.



In Montgomery, we continued this journey of reflection with visits to the **Interpretive Center** near Alabama State University, the **Legacy Museum**, the **National Memorial for Peace and Justice**, and the **Civil Rights Memorial**. We also had the privilege of a brief conversation with Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the **Equal Justice Initiative** (EJI). These experiences challenged us to consider not only the pain of the past but the responsibility of the present.



What made this journey sacred was not simply the places we visited, but the way those places shaped us. We were reminded that pilgrimage is not about seeing history from a distance. It is about allowing that history to speak, to unsettle, to teach, and to call us forward.

As we returned home, we carried with us a deeper appreciation for the witness of the Black church, the resilience of those who struggled for justice, and the ongoing call to truth, remembrance, and faithful action. This spring immersion to Alabama was not only a journey through historic places. It was a journey into deeper understanding.

In Community

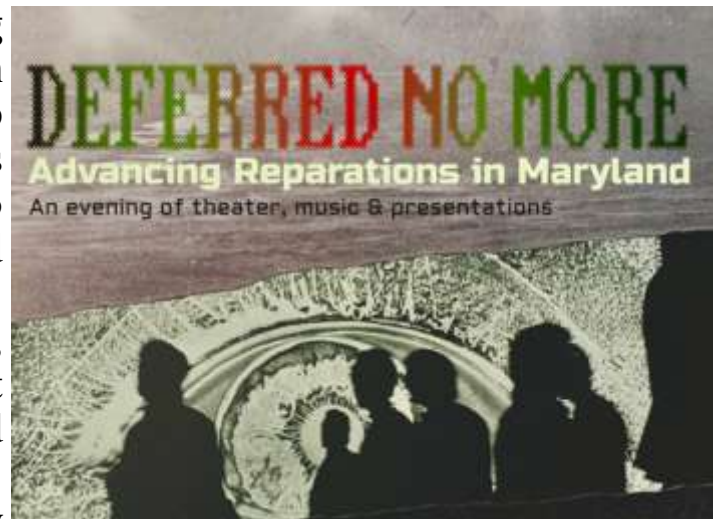
During the month of March, Lovely Lane continued to serve as a place of welcome, creativity, reflection, and public engagement in the life of the wider community.

Among the building-use activities hosted in our space was a rehearsal gathering for **Spotlighters Theatre**, as cast members prepared for their upcoming production of *You Can't Take It With You*, running **April 24 – May 17, 2026**. It was a joy to welcome this group into the building and to support the arts in a way that reflects the spirit of hospitality and community connection.



Left to right: Nerrie Navarro, Daniel Freeman, Glen Charlow, Paul Norfolk, Andrew Syropoulos, April Parvzian, Frank Mancino, Jenna Sharples, Russell Sorbello, Vangie Ridgaway, Daniel Douek, Paul Mancano, Mike Blum.

Lovely Lane also served as the host site for **“Deferred No More: Advancing Reparations in Maryland,”** held on **March 11, 2026**. The event, presented in partnership with The Chloe Center at Johns Hopkins University and others, invited participants to artistic presentations, public conversations, and reflection on reparative justice in Maryland. The program brought together scholars, artists, and community leaders for an evening that connected history, truth-telling, and contemporary public life in meaningful ways. The event was held in Lovely Lane’s sanctuary and welcomed both the university community and the broader Baltimore public.



Together, these March gatherings reflect the many ways Lovely Lane’s sacred space continues to be used for community life beyond Sunday morning—through the arts, civic dialogue, shared learning, and opportunities that bring people together in thoughtful and life-giving ways.

In Loving Memory

Sharra Kelly and Keith Simmers

In the life of the church, there are moments when words must slow down and make room for remembrance. This is one of those moments.

In recent weeks, the Lovely Lane family has experienced the passing of two beloved members of our congregation, **Sharra Kelly** and **Keith Simmers**. With gratitude for their lives and with trust in the mercy of God, we pause to honor their memory.



Sharra Kelly passed away surrounded by family on **March 12, 2026**. There is a sacred tenderness in that final scene—love gathered close, presence held near, and a life accompanied to its earthly resting place by those who knew her best. In that image, we are reminded that even in life's final chapter, love still speaks. As we remember Sharra, we give thanks for the gift of her life, for the relationships that held her, and for the witness of care that surrounded her at the end. Her passing leaves sorrow, and yet it also leaves a quiet testimony: that a life touched by love continues to echo in the hearts of those who remain.

Keith Simmers passed away on **February 3, 2026**. In remembering Keith, we honor a life that was part of the shared fabric of this congregation. Every member of the church leaves an imprint, whether through spoken word, steady presence, quiet faith, or simple fellowship. So it is with Keith. His passing invites us to pause and reflect on the grace of belonging—the ways our lives are woven together in Christ, and the ways even ordinary presence becomes sacred over time. We give thanks for Keith's life and commend him to the everlasting care of God.



As people of faith, we know that grief is real and love is enduring. We do not rush beyond sorrow, nor do we grieve without hope. We hold fast to the promise that in life and in death we belong to God, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May the memory of **Sharra Kelly** and **Keith Simmers** be a blessing. May God's peace rest upon all who mourn. And may the hope of resurrection continue to steady and sustain us all.

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
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CALENDAR

Spring Schedule

Worship 11:00am

Holy Week Services

Maundy Thursday Service - Thursday, April 2, 2026, 6:30 pm - Lovely Lane Sanctuary

Good Friday Service - Friday, April 3, 2026, 12 pm
Bethesda UMC, 6300 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD

Monthly Church Work Day - Mt. Olivet Cemetery, 2390 Frederick Ave, Baltimore, MD
Saturday, April 4, 2026, 9 am to 12 pm

Resurrection Service (Easter) - Sunday, April 5, 2026
Sunrise Service: 6:30 am, followed by fellowship breakfast;
Regular service 11:00 am

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.



4 John Hutchinson
7 Phillip White
18 Rev. Levon Sutton
24 Kevin White