The Tower: Volume 24, Issue 1 September, 2026

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



From the Pastor's Desk: *September Pastoral Letter*

Dear Lovely Lane Family and Friends,

There is something about September that reminds us that life is always moving.

The long days of summer begin to shorten. The familiar rhythms of vacations, travel, and slower schedules gradually give way to school calendars, meetings, ministries, rehearsals, and the routines of another fall. The air itself begins to change, almost quietly at first, until one morning we suddenly realize that another season is upon us.

Scripture reminds us that there is "a season for everything, and a time for every matter under heaven." These words from Ecclesiastes are not simply observations about the passing of time. They are an invitation to recognize that God is present in every season—even those moments when life is changing around us.

Some seasons invite us to begin. Others invite us to build. Some ask us to wait, while others call us to release what has been familiar so that something new may emerge. And often, we do not fully understand what a season has meant until we are already beginning to step into the next one.

The life of the church has seasons as well.

Congregations experience times of growth and challenge, celebration and uncertainty, beginnings and endings. Ministries change. People come and go. Communities around us change. The needs of our neighbors change. Yet through every season, the calling of the church remains: to worship God, to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, to love one another, and to bear faithful witness in the world.

Perhaps that is one of the gifts of autumn. The changing leaves remind us that change itself does not mean that life has ceased. Quite the opposite. Change is part of the rhythm through which creation continues to live.

As we enter this new season together, I hope we will pay attention to what God may be inviting us to see.

What needs our care?

What needs our courage?

What needs to be strengthened?

What might God be asking us to release?

And where might something new already be taking root?

We do not need to have every answer before taking the next faithful step. Faith has never required us to see the entire road ahead. It asks us to trust the One who accompanies us along the way.

So as summer gives way to fall, may we enter this season with gratitude for what has been, attentiveness to what is before us, and hope for what God is still preparing.

The seasons change.

God remains faithful.

And there is still holy work before us.

Grace and peace,

Reverend Levon D. Sutton
Pastor, Lovely Lane UMC

THE TOWER MONTHLY

From the Lay Leader…

September 2026

As summer winds to a close and fall opens up ahead of us, may I be the first to wish you sorrow and anguish.

Wait, what? Why would I wish you such things? Who would want more sorrow? Who would need any anguish? With so many holidays stacked into the last few months of the year... the season of "Happy this" and "Merry that." To be introducing doleful sentiments seems out of place.

But if I wish sorrow and anguish for you, know that I am speaking from the Bible, and hoping that you could be like the Apostle Paul.

" I speak the truth in Christ... I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." [Romans 9:1-2]

All of us who call ourselves "Christian" are apostles to our own degree – witnessing to the power of God in our own way; through our words, through our actions, or simply through how we live our lives and invite others to see. And in our witness, we emphasize the Good in Godly living. The salvation from sin, freedom from fear, having our hearts "strangely warmed." It is natural that we "sell" Christianity as a path to happiness.

But the Apostle Paul shows us a different way. A harder way. But a true way. To invite Christ into your life is also to invite sorrow and anguish in.

We cannot live a Christly life if we are happy all the time. We must see the sin and suffering in the world. We must feel for it. It must cause us pain... for us to be motivated to act against it. Paul says the great sorrow and unceasing anguish he feels is "for the sake of my people..." Paul knows he cannot be content - or complacent - while others do not know that they are God's beloved children. Jesus the Christ himself wept and suffered sorrow and anguish for God's children. So much so that he suffered death for their sake.

Surely a little sorrow and anguish are a good thing.

Earlier in his letter, Paul says, "...the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God." [Romans 8:26-27]

We may shy away from allowing ourselves to feel sorrow and anguish because we mistakenly believe that at the same time we should have solutions. Paul reminds us that we do not need to be able to solve the world's problems... or even our own problems. Just our "wordless groans" are enough to rouse the Spirit and intercede with God. God does not ask us to know God's ways. God only asks us to feel with human hearts. To cry for those who cry.

It is heavy work to carry through the season of Trick or Treat, Turkey Day and Jolly Ol' Saint Nick. But as you rush through the coming months of scheduled and commercialized happiness, do not fail to find the time for sorrow, or to take a moment for anguish. See the world as Christ would see it. Not trying to explain it away or offer a cure, but simply taking it to God. Not falsely getting by with a half a heart, but truthfully living with the whole.

And so let me say again; as summer winds to a close and fall opens up ahead of us, may I be the first to wish you a whole and living heart.

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 this winter has caused additional damage to the tiled roof of that corner of the church building. A roofing contractor has completed repairs in that area of the building and the ceiling will be reinstalled after water intrusion has been determined to be corrected.

21ST CENTURY PROJECT UPDATE

Pending Capital Upgrades

The committee has contracted with Viper Air to complete the second-floor air conditioning work. This vital project will allow expanded use of the upstairs classrooms to users for the warmer months of summer. Work has begun and additional waterproofing work has started in the existing second floor mechanical room to prepare the space for the new AC equipment.

The committee continues to solicit security proposals for key-less entry and security alarm systems throughout the church.

Community Outreach

There continues to be interested in using the church's spaces for community and arts events after the church continues to book new community groups to use underused space.

GIFT CAMPAIGN

Please consider contributing to one of Lovely Lane's Building Funds as we approach the end of Tax Year 2026. 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 **Summer 2026 Tower** edition.

The Restoration Fund – *to maintain building integrity*

Smyrna United Methodist Church, Smyrna, Georgia
Sharon Owen

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

No new contributions

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

Summer has swiftly flown. Our 10:00 AM services come to an end, and we return to 11:00 AM until next summer. Please join your church family and let us worship and fellowship together.
September 13, 2026, is our next Church Council meeting. Following worship we will share Fellowship Hour in Lovely Lane Hall and have the meeting together. Please join us as there is much to report from work in the building and from SPRC.

After 12 faithful years of service, our building sexton **Fred "Ivan" Reyes** has decided to pursue a new endeavor. We celebrate Ivan for his commitment to stewarding our historic centennial building.





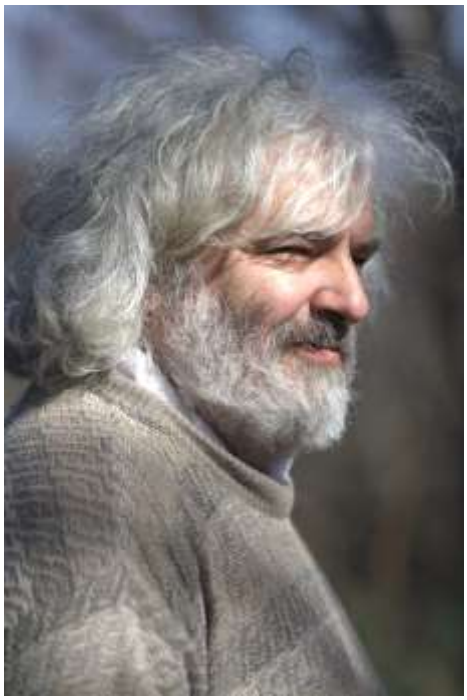
Fellowship Hour: Would you consider hosting a time of fellowship following worship? It can be very simple. Coffee and tea are provided as well as paper supplies. The importance of the fellowship is the time shared with our church family. Lovely Lane is a scattered congregation during the week so Sunday fellowship is vital to draw us together as we share joys and concerns.

Scripture Readers and Greeters: Thanks to Diane Bailey the greeter list is kept up to date. Please continue to serve in that way. Scripture readers are an important part of our worship together. The sheets to sign up are on the bulletin board outside the office.

The fall will bring new opportunities for times together. We look forward to celebrating Bill Scanlon Murphy's 25 years as Music Director and organist! The years will be noted in September when he started. The more significant celebration will be on Homecoming Sunday—the dedication of the building—which will be November 8, 2026. We are planning a covered dish lunch following worship and a time to celebrate Bill. Mark your calendars now!
Nancy Brannan, Church Council

A Celebration of 25 Years of Faithful Service to Lovely Lane's Music Ministry

William "Bill" Murphy



Lovely Lane was my first singing job when we moved to Baltimore in 1998 -organist Ron Schuyler had put out an ad for summer substitutes and I applied shortly after Aisling was born in May. After jumping in to sing a couple of services as an "audition", Ron asked me to stay on permanently, and I was happy to oblige - the Lovely Lane congregation was so welcoming and kind to a newcomer in Baltimore, especially one with a newborn!

I stepped down in 2000 due to other work conflicts, but the following year heard via the grapevine that then-organist John Owen was moving on, and suggested to Bill that he apply for the position. He met with Nancy Nedwell to audition, and the rest, as they say, is history: his first week on the bench was the Sunday after 9/11.

As a singer, I am always grateful for the consistency of a longstanding Music Director; having the organist as a family member makes it even more meaningful, and we have been connected to Lovely Lane one way or another for 28 years, 25 of them with Bill at the organ. While my professional life means I have been the "off-again-on-again" mezzo over the years, Aisling grew up there, and it has been a fixed point for us all in our often-chaotic weeks.



Every week I marvel at his preludes and voluntaries (all of which he improvises on the spot, out of his head, seemingly effortlessly!). And I have never been more proud of my husband and his considerable gifts than the service celebrating Lovely Lane's renovation in 2004, in particular the piece that he wrote for the occasion - I wasn't singing that night, and it was the greatest privilege to be "Mrs Organist", and experience it from the congregation. How lucky are we all!





Congratulations on your years of service, Bill - you bring the loft to life every week, and we couldn't be more thankful. - Madeline

A Celebration of 25 Years of Faithful Service to Lovely Lane's Music Ministry

William "Bill" Murphy



When I was growing up, Sunday mornings ran like a well-oiled machine. My dad and I would race out the door, often before dark, and walk 15 minutes or so to the closest bus stop in Towson. Assuming the bus arrived – not a given, at the time – we'd then ride into Baltimore, laughing and sharing stories from the previous week as we watched the city swish by.

Then – the highlight of the morning for any eight-year-old – we'd stop for breakfast at McDonald's.

He drank oversweet coffee – four cream, four sugars, which I still tease him for to this day – while I nibbled at my weekly cinnamon roll. He asked about school; I asked which hymns he planned to play at that morning's church service. He almost always gave me a bite of his hash brown, and even when I got too old to do so, he let me hold his hand on the brisk walk from North Avenue to Lovely Lane.

When we arrived at church, he'd shift into gear, arranging music for the upcoming service and making copies in the office. Upstairs, in the choir room, he'd finalize that morning's accompaniments, and most weeks, he'd let me tinker on the higher end of the piano while he played a few octaves down, waiting for the choir in those final quiet moments before rehearsal.

Our little compositions taught me about key signatures – if my dad was playing a hymn in F-major, for instance, I could noodle with most of the white keys and one black key. If he minded my presence at the soprano side of the keyboard, he never said so. Sometimes, he'd even show me exactly how to shape my fingers as I discovered new chords and scales.

I don't remember the first time my dad brought me to work with him – in my mind, the above routine could apply to hundreds of Sundays. I'm extraordinarily lucky in that Lovely Lane has been part of our family since the year I was born – my mom began singing here in 1998, and my dad was hired as music director a few years later. I can't imagine anyone but my dad at the organ bench, nor can I picture holidays with my parents taking place anywhere else.

These days, I spend less time at Lovely Lane than I used to. I live a country away, and just don't get to Baltimore as often as I wish I could. But nearly every trip home includes a visit to Lovely Lane, my family's home away from home, where my grandmother's grand piano sits proudly in the sanctuary and where my parents make beautiful music every Sunday morning. I know the choir room, the chapel and even the downstairs basketball court almost as well as I know my childhood bedroom.

That said, as an adult, I've grown to appreciate my dad's work at Lovely Lane even more: His arrangement of the Coventry Carol, which he and the choir performed on the Sunday before Christmas Eve in 2018, constantly gets stuck in my head. His improvised preludes and offertories, too, never cease to amaze me – when I was little, he'd occasionally sneak refrains from my favourite songs into the postlude, and I loved it every time.

My dad is one of the hardest-working, most intelligent people I know. He's eccentric and funny – consider yourself lucky if you've ever heard his banter with the choir in the upstairs rehearsal room.



By any measure, 25 years is a long time. But for me, my dad's tenure at Lovely Lane has quite literally been a lifetime. I couldn't be prouder to be his daughter – or to work as his de facto elf every Christmas Eve, fetching Silent Night candles and extra bulletins between hymns. In the important ways, time with him at Lovely Lane now is just as meaningful as it was 20 years ago. The church is a special place; but, as I think we all know by now, he's a special guy.

Congratulations, Dad – I love you! - Ansling

Lovely Lane United Methodist Church
Second Floor HVAC Improvement Project

Work began this week to renovate the HVAC systems in the two second floor classrooms. The new systems will provide reliable, individual cooling for each classroom in hot weather, and because they are heat pumps, also individual heating for the rooms in winter when the main boilers are not required for larger spaces in the building.

This is another improvement designed to make all of the spaces in our building more attractive and useful for the local community, funded by a State Bond Bill.

Three of the photographs show demolition work of the old impractical, inefficient HVAC system in the 2nd floor mechanical room, large classroom and on the roof.

The other three document the mobile crane cleverly squeezed into the triangular space between the chapel and the 1930 addition, lifting the new outdoor units up onto the flat roof. They'll be mounted inconspicuously on the I bean structure which formerly carried the much larger, outdoor unit for the old HVAC system.
Duncan Hodge, Vice Chair, Trustees








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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TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
THANK YOU FOR PROMPT DELIVERY!

CALENDAR

Fall 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.

Baltimore Lab School

Coach Richard Basketball
Saturdays, 2pm - 5 pm, Gymnasium

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.

We the following September Birthdays:

1 Emora Brannan

4 Angie Ferguson

6 Patrick Brannan

9 Simone Sutton

10 Johnny Olszewski

13 Eve Gillison

13 Matt O'Laughlin

23 Quinn Gillison

26 Ellie O'Laughlin-Spurling

