

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
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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: May/June Pastoral Letter

Dear Lovely Lane Family and Friends,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Welcome to our Summer Edition of The Tower. Rather than our traditional monthly publication, this edition invites us to pause and reflect on the remarkable journey we have shared throughout these summer months while also looking ahead to the opportunities still before us. As the pace of life changes with school recesses, family vacations, community gatherings, and moments of well-earned rest, we also remember that the life of the Church never takes a vacation. The Spirit continues to move, to gather, to inspire, and to send us into the world as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Looking back over these months, we have experienced a season rich with God's presence. We journeyed from the joy of Easter into the birth of the Church at Pentecost, celebrating once again that the Holy Spirit continues to breathe new life into God's people. Pentecost reminds us that the Church was never intended to remain behind closed doors. Filled with the Spirit, the disciples became a community of courage, compassion, and hope—a calling that continues to define the Church today.

During this season, we have also celebrated the gift of our connection within the wider United Methodist Church. It has been a privilege to welcome confirmation classes, youth groups, clergy, and congregations from across our conference and beyond as they made pilgrimage to Lovely Lane. Watching young people walk these historic halls, learning the story of early American Methodism while exploring their own faith, has been a profound reminder that our heritage is not simply preserved in brick and stone, but lives on through every generation that answers Christ's call.

June also marked one of the most significant moments in our congregation's history. On June 22, 1772, the Rev. Joseph Pilmore established the Methodist Society in Baltimore, beginning the story that would become Lovely Lane United Methodist Church. More than two and a half centuries later, we continue to stand as stewards of that remarkable legacy. We give thanks not merely for our history, but for God's continuing work among us today. Our founders were people of deep conviction who believed the Gospel should transform lives and communities. Their witness challenges us to carry that same spirit of faithfulness into our own generation.

Throughout the summer, many of us have also embraced a different rhythm of life. Vacations, family reunions, afternoons with grandchildren, neighborhood cookouts, and moments of quiet reflection remind us that rest is not the absence of discipleship—it is one of God's gifts. Throughout Scripture, God invites His people into rhythms of work and Sabbath, ministry and renewal. Even Jesus withdrew to quiet places to pray, reflect, and prepare for the work before Him.

My prayer is that each of us has found moments this summer to rest not only physically but spiritually—to listen for God's voice, to rediscover joy, and to renew our hearts for the ministry still ahead. Whether your travels have taken you across the country or your summer has

been spent close to home, may you know that Christ walks with you wherever you are.

Throughout these pages, you will discover the many ways Lovely Lane has sought to live out its calling beyond Sunday morning worship. This summer has been marked by meaningful partnerships that have opened our doors and strengthened our witness throughout Baltimore. We celebrated our fellowship with neighboring congregations during the East Baltimore Hub worship gathering, welcomed community leaders and residents for forums sponsored by the Association of Black Charities, hosted a five-week youth summer program through Ballet After Dark, and provided space for thoughtful civic dialogue through Amy L. Bernstein's presentation, Telling Stories to Strengthen Community & Civic Engagement. We have also been delighted to welcome the Baltimore Vocal Village, whose commitment to artistic expression and community building reflects our desire to cultivate sacred spaces where creativity, conversation, and fellowship flourish.

Each of these gatherings reflects something larger than the events themselves. They are expressions of our conviction that Lovely Lane is called to be more than a historic landmark. We are called to be a living, welcoming presence where faith meets community, where relationships are strengthened, where diverse voices are welcomed, and where partnerships become opportunities for God's transforming work. Together, these ministries remind us that honoring our rich heritage is best accomplished by faithfully investing in the life of our city and embracing the new opportunities God continues to place before us.

As we look toward the close of summer and the beginning of a new ministry season, let us continue to pray for our congregation, our East Baltimore Hub churches, our Annual Conference, our bishop, district leadership, clergy and laity, and all who faithfully serve throughout our connection. Let us also pray for our neighbors and for the city of Baltimore, that we might continue to be a congregation known not only for our history, but for our hospitality; not only for our beautiful sanctuary, but for our open hearts; not only for preserving the story of Methodism, but for faithfully writing its next chapter.

May these summer months leave us renewed in body, refreshed in spirit, and recommitted to the work God has entrusted to us. May the same Holy Spirit who descended at Pentecost continue to kindle within us a faith that loves boldly, serves joyfully, welcomes generously, and leads courageously. And may Lovely Lane continue to stand as both a beacon of our Methodist heritage and a vibrant witness to the living Christ in the heart of Baltimore.

With gratitude for the privilege of serving alongside you,
Reverend Levon D. Sutton
Pastor, Lovely Lane UMC

From the Lay Leader...

June 2026

With Pentecost Sunday past, and the Easter season at its end, it is a good time to think about going forward in the promises of the risen Christ.

On the liturgical calendar, this is known as “Ordinary Time.” But what could be ordinary about living in times infused with Resurrection, Victory over Death in sin, and life in the New Covenant?

True, “ordinary” in this sense does not mean “common” but “time of counting.” Still, as the longest part of our year without a major holiday, it can seem uneventful. So what better time to focus on the promise of Eternal Life?

Picture life eternal. What mental image does that conjure for you? What do you think being given eternal life will be like?

Maybe a part of your imagination goes to what would happen if you were sent to “the bad place” when you die. As children (both in our own lives and in our immaturity as a culture) we learned a picture of sinners spending Eternity in the fires of the pit. Endless suffering and unquenchable thirst. Those who would hope to make us live a just life by fear would say, “Eternity... is a long time.”

There’s a lot wrong with this fable. The major flaw being that the vision of spending eternity in the inferno starts with the assumption that sinners are also given eternal life. Maybe we have built this dark fantasy out of the fear that an even worse curse would be simply... not to be. To cease to exist. To know that death really is the end. Perhaps being in misery is still more acceptable than being nothing at all.

The second thing wrong with this eternity is the notion of being a “good Christian” through fear. It seems very un-Christ-like that we should live the life Christ wants us to live out of fear. Indeed, I put the words “good Christian” in quotes because this common phrase is, itself, nonsensical. There are no “bad Christians” or even “mediocre Christians.” Christ would reject any qualifier to the state of being Christian. Even more would Jesus abhor the idea of being a “frightened Christian.”

What, then, about if you are sent to “the Good place” when you die. What do you think Eternity looks like there? Will your soul go on forever? Will you spend all your days in comfort and fulfillment?

Believe it or not, there’s a lot wrong with this idea as well.

If you’re like me, you picture eternal life as a kind of life that goes into the future forever and ever.

Maybe you will get to see the age of flying cars, colonies on other planets and even a great age of peace. But this fantasy version of Eternity suffers from Mortal Myopia. We automatically assume living forever means in the same direction we’ve been going in our earthly life. But when we are united with God, we will see that Eternity goes both ways.

Surely God is not restricted as we are. And when we live with God eternally, we gain life that reaches back as far as God, as well as life that stretches forward.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God...in him was life, and the life was the light of mankind.”

Christ’s promise of Eternal Life is not simply a bonus round... Christ IS eternal life. Christ was in the beginning. And if you are in Christ, you will also be in the beginning.

The other thing wrong with this “good place” view of eternity is the phrase that I have slipped past you twice now, and I’ll bet you didn’t stop me; “when you die.”

Christ did not come to establish a ministry of death. Christ brings us into a mission of Life. And Life Eternal is not limited to the Afterlife. Christ wants us to take up mantle of Eternal life now. To live as eternal people even in our ordinary time.

To live only for reward or punishment after we die can never be the purpose of Emmanuel. God sent Jesus to live among us so that we might see Godly living in our quickening days. That we might live with care for life that far surpasses our counted days on earth... but at the same time as people who own all that has come before; from Resurrection, to the Prophets, to the Law, to the Garden, and even to “In the beginning.”

God has laid out all time for you not as some far-off someday, but as a promise fulfilled today. You are already living your life eternal. What will you do with so generous a gift?

Peace,
John Strawbridge
LAY LEADER



From the Lay Leader...

July-August 2026

As I write these words it is the first day of summer. I started this morning – on the “longest day of the year” – outside watering my gardens. It is the perfect time, because this is the one time of the season when everything is in bloom at the same time. I have many plants that will bloom all season, but some only for a week or two... and this is that week.

I have a friend who lives out of state and who comes to visit me each year when he comes to see his parents; just before Easter and just before Christmas. At those times, my garden is dry and brown. Leaves cover the ground and weeds grow in the cracks. So on a day like today I wish that my friend could see my garden now..!

Now, I have to confess that I am wary when it comes to writing about a garden. It is an easy and over-used metaphor. It is apt, as gardens remind us most directly of God’s handywork. But it is, as they say, low-hanging fruit (indeed, there it is again).

But bear with me on this. Because my point is less about the garden, and more about the gardener.

I know full well that I am taking pride in something that I had very little to do with. I place the flowers in the soil and water and fertilize as I can. But the hard work of growing and making blooms is through no effort or talent of mine. That is the plants doing their work. But still... I want people to see it. I want people to admire it, if I’m being honest. I want people to agree with me that it is a very fine garden. And I am frustrated when people only see my gardens in the cold and dry times. “Yes, but you should see it when...”

Jesus the Christ calls those who would be his disciples to a ministry of witness. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19). “...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

But it is not Jesus’s admonition alone that drives us. The fact is, when Christ is in our lives, we want to witness. We desire to share that feeling. To see recognition in others eyes and hear their affirmation that it is beautiful.

The reality, though, is that it is not always that easy.

It is easy to proclaim the Grace of Jesus and the love of God when it everything is growing and in bloom. It is easy on the first day of long sunlight. But what are we to do when the days grow short and dark and cold, and the blossoms are gone.

When war plagues our world. When disease grips those we love. When greed and indifference seem to be all around. How do we witness in those dry days? To what do we point and say, “See how wonderful God’s garden is...?”

For every longest day of the year, there is a longest night. For every mild day, there is a day of sleet. It’s God’s full plan. If it is easy to testify to the glory of God on the “good” days, how much more needed is our testimony on the “bad” ones? There is no great merit in proclaiming what anyone can plainly see. But to be able to speak boldly about the roots that spread in the autumn... the seed that awaits underground in in the winter... the sprouts that are awakened by the rainy gray days of spring... to love the Lord and to witness His glory in the hard times is to truly know God, and to truly lift up God’s kingdom.

They will tell you that you are crazy, that you are delusional, if you find hope in dark times and love the Lord when things are bleak. If you smile, if you sing, if you show pride in the Lord’s garden when no flowers or fruit are visible, you may be mocked and criticized and told that your faith is a lie. But take heart and hold fast. Never stop seeing what was and will be again.

Enjoy these days of summer. These are the easy days. God gives them to you freely. Rest your spirit for the harder days that must surely come. Be ready to given them back to God just as freely.

Peace,
John Strawbridge
LAY LEADER



WORK TO RESTORE, REHABILITATE AND MAINTAIN OUR 19 TH 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 been contacted to make repairs to the roof tiles in that area.

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 is expected to begin in mid-August. 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.

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 **April 2026 Tower** edition.

The Restoration Fund – *to maintain building integrity*

Smyrna First United Methodist Church

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

IRA of Linda Webb

*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

Everyone who is a part of the Lovely Lane Family should hear about the wonderful Easter celebrations we shared on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026.

At 6:30 AM we had 22 people who gathered to rejoice at the Resurrection of Christ our Lord. There were members of the church and several visitors. There was a couple from the neighborhood who came because they saw the sign! They said they had passed the church for years and never come. All were invited to join us for breakfast that had been prepared by Jackie Noller and Nancy Brannan with assistance from Linda Webb. People tarried and visited. Some went home for a nap or take care of pets and returned for the 11:00 service! We welcomed several visitors at the 11:00 service as well.

It was wonderful to share joy together. We were blessed by the spirit of welcome and love as we spent time together. Next year we hope more will join for worship and fellowship.

Fellowship Hour

Our church family lingers following worship to share time with coffee and a snack. We come from many directions, and Sunday morning is when we gather to share many things about our lives away from Lovely Lane. We hope you will consider being a regular part of the fellowship.

Fellowship Hosts, Readers, Greeters

You have numerous opportunities to serve with your church family. Fellowship can be quite simple. It is gathering and time together that is so important. Please consider how you can be a part of those who serve in each way.

Flowers

We are seeking opinions about our flowers. The gift of altar flowers is a special tribute to those you choose to remember or honor. You may take the flowers following services. Like all things the cost of flowers has risen. The two vases are \$50.00 each; there is an additional delivery fee. We are seeking information from several florists and the opinion about the use of artificial flowers. If you have an opinion, please speak to (email) Nancy Brannan or John Strawbridge.

Summer worship hour will be 10:00 AM for July and August.

Please remember UMCOR and Manna House. The fires in the Southeast will cause great need for our churches and people in those places. Manna House has expanded their programs in the community in numerous ways; we should be proud. The directors and board there say it is primarily United Methodists who are supporters of their work.

Send a note, an email, or call a church family member and let them know you are thinking of them.

Peace and blessings abound each day,
Nancy Brannan



On Thursday, May 21, 2026, we were fortunate to have a local author, Amy L Bernstein, host a panel discussion, *Telling Stories to Strengthen Community & Promote Civic Engagement*. Amy convened this panel as a result of writing her novel, *Tent City*, about struggling to survive personal tragedy during the economic collapse of society.

The event was well attended with 8 panelists. Alanah Davis, Chief Storyteller for the Baltimore Mayor's Office of Innovation, was one of the panelists and was excited to have the opportunity to be at Lovely Lane. We discussed having her back for more events in the future.

We had a very busy weekend on the 3rd weekend of the month! On Saturday, June 20th and Sunday, June 21st Mobtown Ballroom used our Fellowship Hall for a dancing workshop weekend. Mobtown has a café/event space on North Avenue, but needs extra dance space for big events and they loved being at Lovely Lane, which is walkable from there space. Photos of the event are credited to



When the dancing took a break, our choir member, Scott Hounsou, launched a new choral initiative on June 20th in the evening with singing and festivities in the Brannan Chapel. Several current members attended, and some former friends returned. We are looking forward to being part of Vocal Village's launch and continued growth!

On June 27th, the dancing reconvened. This time it was the Baltimore Folk Music Society hosting Baltimore Family Barn Dance. Children got a wonderful introduction to square, contra, and waltz among other dances. Fun was had by all!



For the month of July, Ballet After Dark, an education nonprofit in Baltimore City, is in the building with a group of high school aged City students. This group of young ladies are perfecting dance and learning sewing. As well as, entrepreneurial skills to harness for amazing futures. It is so wonderful to have so much activity in the building for

We are so excited to be able to expand our community reach by partnering with the 29th Street Community Center to collect school supplies for their big giveaway in August. Please support this effort by dropping off supplies to the church office any-time from now until August 16th. Trish will be sure to get all collected items to the center. Thank you for supporting this new partnership with the 29th St. Community Center.

29th Street COMMUNITY CENTER

BACK TO SCHOOL WELLNESS BASH

PARTNERSHIP & SUPPORT CALL

August 22 • 29th Street Community Center

29th Street Community Center will host our Back to School Wellness Bash featuring a health fair, wellness resources, and a back to school giveaway for local families.

WE ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR SUPPORT THROUGH:

- Backpack giveaways
- Resource tables
- School supply donations
- Youth and family wellness services

If you know of any organizations, churches, nonprofits, businesses, or corporations that support back to school events in Baltimore, please tag them below or send a message.

We're building partnerships now to make this a great event for the community. Thank you in advance for your support!

STRONG FAMILIES. STRONG COMMUNITIES.

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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TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
THANK YOU FOR PROMPT DELIVERY!



CALENDAR

Summer Schedule

July&August
Worship 10:00am

Fellowship Hour/Guided Tour
Fellowship Hour: Sundays following worship

Ballet After Dark YouthWorks Program
Monday - Friday , 9am-2pm in July

Baltimore Folk Music Society
Wednesday, 7 pm Weekly dances in the Lovely Lane Fellowship Hall each Wednesday of every month.
August 8, 2pm-6pm, Family Barn Dance

Baltimore Lab School
Out for the Summer

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

Skyland UMC Overnight Visit
July 29-August 2

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.



June
21-Carol Curtis
24- Sasha Bailey
26- Liam Hines
27- Betsy Fisk
29- Shirley Reckley

May
5- Maxine Stitzer
22- Emanuel Nixon
24- Catherine O’Laughlin
29 - Robert Furbay

July
1 - Atticus Brannon
12 - Susan Allenback
18- Kristinae O’Laughlin
August
10 - Elizabeth Brannan
11 - Duncan Hodge