

LIVE B.I.G. Salutes a

United Methodist Clergywoman



You think of all the hours a minister puts into any old routine pastoring job. Then you add renovation of a historic Methodist building. Then pile on top of that a heartfelt concern for the inner-city needy...**Pastor Nancy Nedwell** of Lovely Lane United Methodist Church in Baltimore is one busy lady. And she's been entrusted with a very important charge.

Lovely Lane is the mother church of United Methodism in this country. The original building was constructed in 1774. "John Wesley had reluctantly agreed to the American Methodists' desire to organize their own church," goes the story from the church's website, and for the benefit of those who have never heard it, it bears recounting here: "He sent Thomas Coke to supervise the process and to consecrate Francis Asbury as 'general superintendent' of the Methodists in America.

"When Coke and Asbury met...in November 1784, Asbury refused the appointment unless the preachers elected him. The meeting was scheduled for the next month, December, at Lovely Lane Meeting House in Baltimore.

"Freeborn Garrettson was sent 'like an arrow,' in Coke's words, to contact as many preachers as possible to meet in Baltimore. Garrettson recorded in his journal: 'My dear Master enabled me to ride about twelve hundred miles in about six weeks; and preach going and coming constantly. The conference began on Christmas Day.

"More than sixty preachers (and numerous visitors) responded to Garrettson's call."

On Friday, December 24, 1784, Asbury wrote, "...It was

agreed to form ourselves into an Episcopal Church, and to have superintendents, elders, and deacons. When the conference was seated, Dr. Coke and myself were unanimously elected to the superintendency of the Church, and my ordination followed.

"We spent the whole week in conference, debating freely, and determining all things by a majority of votes. We were in great haste and did much business in a little time."

"The members [also] elected 12 preachers as 'elders,' Wesley's suggested term for fully ordained clergy. The conference also formally adopted The Sunday Service, Wesley's abridgement of the English Book of Common Prayer, as the new church's liturgical guide..."

Home to United Methodists

Lovely Lane is "in the heart of Baltimore City," Pastor Nedwell recently told the Live B.I.G. video-taping crew. "This is the mother church of our denomination. This is the place where the denomination began.

"This particular building was built in 1884. It was built as the Centennial monument to our denomination. When the Methodist Church was a hundred years old, it was decided that this would be the place where we would build this monument to remember that partic-

ular occasion, but also to remember that we have mission and ministry that continues all over the country, and this is a place where people come from all over the world, actually. If there's a building that would be home to United Methodists anyplace, this is certainly the place."

And what a place it is!

The Philadelphia Preservation Corporation describes it as "A church whose exterior is Romanesque in style, with Etruscan or



Tuscan detailing, having massive granite walls, a 130-ton barrel-tile roof, and as its most striking feature, a 225-foot tower capped by a conical roof of artichoke tile and a huge weather vane.

“Stained glass windows by Louis C. Tiffany and Francis Lathrop blended with blue and gold decoration in the 500-seat chapel and shades of Pompeian red in the oval-shaped main worship room...”

The centerpiece is “the great vaulted ceiling inspired by the starry mosaics of Ravenna...painted to show the heavens as they appeared at 3 a.m. the day of the church’s dedication, with all the major stars and planets in their proper positions...”

“The sky is the limit,” the Rev. David McAllister-Wilson—president of Wesley Seminary in Washington—announced at the 2003 dedication of the \$1.2 million newly restored worship area. “Let us resolve to ensure that Lovely Lane does not become like Stonehenge, where tourists come as visitors, mystified and uncertain what these stones mean. We must have...the confidence to dream king-size dreams with our eyes open and to step across that vast frontier that is in the mind of God.”

Within red walls that graduate, as the walls ascend, from Pompeian to Venetian red, worshippers sitting in the 800 newly-upholstered seats (feet resting on new carpet) can appreciate the musical treasure that stands next in line for rehabilitation, the Austin organ.

Pastor Nedwell recently primed her congregation for the daunting task of raising the necessary funds. For openers, she referenced Stephen Ambrose’s best-selling *Undaunted Courage*, about the Lewis and Clark expedition.

“After two years of battling insurmountable problems—hunger, fatigue, desertion, hostile enemies, severe illness, death—the party had reached the headwaters of the Missouri River. All their advance information had led them to believe that once they reached the Continental Divide, they would face about a half-day portage, and then reach the waters of the Columbia River and float safely to the Pacific Ocean. The hard part was behind them.

“Or so they thought.”

They were wrong, and the restoration effort at Lovely Lane still has distance ahead, as well.

“Some people might be content to settle for what we have done at this point,” Pastor Nedwell wrote in a pastoral letter.

Things like reinstallation of a tile roof, restoration of four vestibules, a repainted dome mural, upgraded lighting, a superb new sound system...

“We have faced a number of challenges in these recent years,” she continued.

“The stellar results are visible.



Pastor Nedwell, Lovely Lane and Manna House, will be highlighted in the new Live B.I.G. curriculum. According to Marj Pon, Director of Children’s Resources for the United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville, “Live B.I.G. is a new children’s Sunday school curriculum that integrates short video clips each week to enliven and supplement the lesson plan. Each month there is an ‘On the Road’ segment where a crew traveled to churches and mission projects around the country to videotape and interview people and highlight their ministries.” You can learn more about Live B.I.G. at iLiveBIG.com.

“There is always a new task before us. We have recently signed a contract to do some restoration work on the sanctuary organ. We have a magnificent setting and want to have an organ that is dependable and with improved tone.

“We are expecting to raise \$270,000 for this project.”

Watching the budget and spreading the organ restoration over the next 18 months, Pastor Nedwell has had to bone up on organ-speak: re-taping of the chest. Increasing the size of the rectifier. The optional addition of unit action in the Swell Cornopean. Coupler reversibles in the capture combination system.

“It is early in our journey,” Pastor Nedwell wrote. “We have much to learn from the mountains before us.”

Historic Graveyard

You can’t just restore a historic church without paying some attention to its old

graveyard. Mt. Olivet’s website includes individual plot maps, names, and dates of burial for 35,000 old graves.

Of special interest is the “Bishop’s Lot.”

Dedicated in 1854 with an 18-ft. Italian marble monument to “traveling preachers and their wives,” the burial ground holds the remains of Bishops Francis Asbury, Enoch George, John Emory, and Beverly Waugh as well as the ashes of E. Stanley Jones and his wife Mabel.

There’s also a new nursery! And heavy community use of the building.

Pastor Nedwell has a lot on her plate, yet “she’s a wonderful person to work for,” says Nancy Williamson, church secretary.

An undergraduate degree from Purdue in consumer and family science prepared Pastor Nedwell for Drew Theological School in Madison, New Jersey. Urban ministries included Harlem, and she has daycare center, thrift store, and senior citizen residential program background. Moreover, she pastored three churches in Maryland before taking on Lovely Lane: St. Matthews in Bowie, First United Methodist in Hyattsville, and Towson United Methodist in Baltimore County.

She’s been at Lovely Lane since July 1, 1999.

An Anchor in the Community

“In our community, this congregation is looked to as an anchor,” she told the Live B.I.G. video crew. “We’re on the corner of 22nd and St. Paul’s Street, and we’ve been in this unbroken ministry for all of these years, and we find that as a small congregation we have a mighty work that’s in front of us. The faithfulness of this congregation makes it happen.”

The work includes Manna House.

“It’s the oldest soup kitchen in Baltimore, and it provides more than soup,” Pastor Nedwell said.

“It’s soup plus!

“They do resume writing. They provide clothing. They provide counseling for jobs, job opportunities. It’s a wonderful program.

“It provides an outward expression for a lot of our ministry. We know that in this day and age there are many reasons peo-

ple have for being in difficult situations, and we have people who work in all of the areas of social justice, so that there's an opportunity for them to correct the problems that cause people all of this difficulty in the first place.

“Our children work there and help feed those who are ill, those who are hungry. And it is also a place where our adults come. A number of people have provided school supplies because there are children who are also homeless along with their parents, and we remember as they get ready for school. We remember them during the holidays and at different times during the year so that they have all their needs taken care of.

“Manna House started with several partner churches and we are the last remaining partner church that continues to provide support for this vital ministry.”

Manna House now has a case manager, too, a life skills counselor, hot morning meals, showers, phones, and mental health services.

You can't talk about Lovely Lane without mentioning its museum and archives, quilt shows, research library, and research help. There are staff members who conduct genealogical research for United Methodist Historical Society members. There are group tours of the church.

The church's membership draws from a wide geographic swath and is considerably higher than the average 75 worshippers who fill the pews on a normal Sunday.

A heavy load rests on the shoulders of the woman who leads it all, and a new United Methodist resource celebrates her capacity to carry it well.



Guests eating at Manna House at Lovely Lane United Methodist Church.