

InSpire

Our Vestry goals for 2025 (and other Vestry actions)

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The weather delayed our Vestry Conference in early January, but we finally got to meet on Saturday, January 25. As is our custom at Church of the Resurrection, the Vestry Conference is where we both reflect on scripture and set our overarching goals for the year. These are the *big* goals that we plan to work on in the coming year:

Goal 1. Implement an Abundance Ministry

In 2025, implement the first year of an “Abundance Ministry” to use \$500,000 of our invested funds in equal proportions over three years to support feeding programs, education, emergency financial assistance, and new initiatives.

Goal 2. Investigate beginning a Citizenship Ministry

By April 30, 2025, complete research on a potential citizenship ministry and the status of English as a Secondary Language (ESOL) classes to determine if they are viable programs. If so, by May 31, 2025, proceed to seek Vestry approval for funding the program(s). By September 30, 2025, have the approved program(s) underway.

Vestry Goal 3. Move the church to online bill paying

By September 1, 2025, implement online bill payment by accomplishing these steps:

- Consultant meeting with Finance Committee to be held in February 2025
- Identify Consultant’s recommendations and steps required for implementation
- Present proposal for implementation of online bill payment to Vestry at the June 17 or July 15 Vestry Meeting (depending on consultant’s pace of work).

At its regular meeting on January 28, the Vestry appointed our Wardens, David Ewing and Kat Turner, Co-chairs of a Committee to oversee the work of the Abundance Ministry and Vestry members John Kirk, Courtenay Brinckerhoff, and Gbehlee Savice as Abundance Committee members. Betsy Faga, Verleah Kosloske, Dan Parker, and Bruce Lazenby are exploring the Citizenship Ministry. Treasurer Ken Gay, aided by Roland Blocksom and Courtenay Brinckerhoff

is working to implement online bill-paying.

On January 28, the Vestry also modified the operating budget for 2025, primarily by moving the food pantry costs to the Abundance Ministry and recognizing two recent part-time hires: a Sunday pianist beginning February 17 and a bookkeeping consultant to help move us to online bill-paying. The resultant budget now projects using up to \$17,789 from our invested funds for operations, reduced from the \$49,630 previously projected. The Vestry also “captured” the \$11,055 “surplus” from 2024 (gained by not having a musician on staff for much of the year) for use in 2025.

Finally, the Vestry elected Roland Blocksom as our delegate to the Alexandria Region Council of Episcopal Churches, and elected David Ewing as our alternate. The vote for our delegate and alternate to our annual diocesan convention will be held at the Vestry’s February meeting.

~ The Rev. Jo Belser



The Rev. Jo Belser

Seeking justice

In a recent article in *The Atlantic* magazine entitled, “Don’t Give Up on the Truth,” Peter Wehner asserts that—quoting Robert F. Kennedy Sr.—“striking out against injustice is always right; it always matters.”

We Christians disagree on what, exactly, injustice *is*. However, I doubt that any at Resurrection would argue against Kennedy’s assertion to the people of South Africa that “each time someone stands up for an ideal, or to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice,” a tiny ripple of hope is released that, collectively, “can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

Does it matter what oppression is being resisted? What injustice would *you* act against? Opinions vary because there is a difference in what we Christians consider to be justice.

Some make a distinction between “biblical justice” and “social justice.” Biblical justice involves treating others according to an understanding of good and evil. The problem with biblical justice is that we disagree about what God considers good and evil. Plus, God’s justice doesn’t always jibe with human inclinations. For instance, is it “just” that a late-in-the-day vineyard worker gets paid the same as an all-day worker in God’s economy?

We also know that mercy trumps judgment ([James 2:13](#)). Is biblical justice getting what we “deserve,” given our conduct, or by our giving Christ-like mercy? Do we emulate Christ rescuing a woman from being stoned (mercy) or his admonition to her to go and sin no more (judgment)?

Social justice, on the other hand, rights societal wrongs and defends the poor and vulnerable. Social justice

I’ve been thinking about justice to understand how people of faith, in good faith, vary so much in thinking about whether and how to react to the current events in our country. However, whatever our understanding of justice, the current situation seems to demand a response from each of us. Even if we think the actions being taken by our government are necessary, do we not have a mandate to

“...whatever our understanding of justice, the current situation seems to demand a response from each of us.”



works to end slavery, poverty, racism, and homophobia. For secularists, social justice stems from an inclination in favor of human dignity and equality. For Christians, a social justice stems from numerous scripture verses to take the side of the poor or marginated. Some see this as “Christ’s work” for us to do, whereas others see this as a hijacking of biblical justice.

help those in need affected by what is happening?

Acting justly involves treating other with fairness. Loving mercy calls us to show compassion and forgiveness. So I ask this also: However you understand justice, what will *you* do in the name of Christ, in the name of justice?

~ Rev. Jo

Extravagant abundance

Through circumstances of fate, the preferred candidates being already oversubscribed with critical professional activities or home duties, I was selected Senior Warden. I was last Senior Warden nearly 40 years ago. In the words of Noble Prize winning poet/song writer Bob Dylan, in his autobiographical tune *My Back Pages*, “I was so much older then, I am younger than that now.” In my first three weeks on the job the Church was closed for in-person services two weeks in a row, that had never happened before. Parishioners that I hold dear had serious medical emergencies. Off to a good start.

Not all is doom and gloom. I am part of a great group of people who have answered God’s call to serve on the Vestry. They have been hard at work. As you will read in portions of *The InSpire*, one of their products is the establishment of the Abundance Committee. This group will make recommendations to the Vestry as to how to distribute \$500,000 over a three-year period. It is a direct result of the year-long discernment process we undertook in 2024. I have high hopes for the proposals from the Abundance Committee; stay tuned.

I hope that the Abundance Committee completes its work in short order. We should be able to achieve a broad consensus about

where the Holy Spirit is calling us to invest material things. That done, we can turn our full attention to a much more important task. Increasing spiritual abundance, discerning how to invest it and getting about sharing God’s gifts. Wonderful.

We are off to a great start. In her sermon on the Second Sunday of Advent, Rev. Theresa mentioned abundance seven times. Drawing upon Psalm 36: 5-10, she shared:

Jesus’ first sign is the reminder of the way that God created the world to be. It is a reminder of God’s covenant with us. Consistently and repeatedly God invites the community back into the covenant reminding us of that kingdom—filled with abundance, extravagant abundance, and grace upon grace. We hear this in the words of the Psalm, and it is the world that the Prophets call us to.

Pitch perfect. The world needs our spiritual abundance as never before. For example, recent federal public policy changes have created significant challenges for one of our major spiritual abundance efforts: the West End Food Pantry. More specifically, the funding freeze has seriously disrupted ALIVE! from getting into its new warehouse space and the tariffs are hitting our mainstay of pommes de

terre, choux, carottes et oignons du Québec (potatoes, cabbage, carrots and onions from Quebec). Faith tells me that the Pantry team will meet the challenges as it has so often.

The New Testament often speaks of spiritual abundance, emphasizing the richness of a life lived in relationship with God. Ephesians 3:20 describes God’s ability to provide beyond what we can imagine:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

This passage conveys that true abundance comes from a life centered on faith, generosity, and trust in God’s provision. It’s about more than just material wealth; it’s about experiencing the fullness of life that comes from a deep, spiritual connection with God.

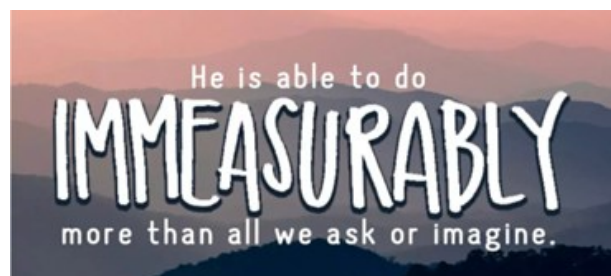
Thanks be to God.

~ David Ewing



David Ewing

“...true abundance comes from a life centered on faith, generosity, and trust in God’s provision”



My spiritual journey



"Maxi" Maxwell

"I am now a full member of the Episcopal Church, and a member of the Church of the Resurrection."

My name is David John Maxwell. Everyone knows me as Maxi. I grew up in Edison, New Jersey, where I graduated from high school and was a member of Saint Matthews the Apostle Catholic Church. I turned down a full scholarship to Rutgers University to enlist in the Navy. I didn't really have a choice in the matter. At that time, I was very interested in becoming a Catholic Priest. I started sending admissions inquiries to all the seminaries I found out about in my high school guidance counselor's office. My Dad started intercepting them, and one day a Navy recruiter was in the backyard drinking lemonade with my parents when I came home from work at Friendlies. It seemed my future at the seminary was cut short. I entered the active-duty Navy in Newark, New Jersey, on July 7, 1992, and went to basic training at Great Lakes, Illinois.

After multiple tours with special warfare, I attained a Bachelor of Arts in Intelligence Studies from American Military University while working at the Chief of Naval Operations. My thesis project was on Intelligence Activities in the Roman Army from the 1st Century to the 3rd Century. I also went back to school for operational intelligence at the Navy's school at the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington, DC.

I was assigned to KENNEDY Irregular Warfare Center at the Office of Naval Intelligence, and again deployed multiple

times with Naval Special Warfare, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Units, and Special Operations Command. This was followed by a tour at FARRAGUT Technical Analysis. My last tour was at the Naval Observatory where I worked as the acting Intelligence Officer, as an enlisted intelligence specialist, and as head librarian. I retired from the Navy on June 1, 2020.

After the Navy, I worked on modernizing air traffic control systems at the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), at the Transportation Security Administration, and Naval Sea Systems Command. I'm back at FAA, but now in Aviation Safety.

I was accepted into the Bachelors of Science in Aviation Management at the school of aeronautics at Liberty University. One of the requirements at Liberty was to take required Global Studies, religious-based classes. I liked the classes so much that I added a minor in Global Studies and later a double major in Religion with a focus on Apologetics. I found a deep sense of purpose and loved learning how to defend Christianity through the apologetic method. Delving deep into Christian theology and biblical studies was very rewarding. I volunteered at my local Catholic Church in any capacity that I could. I felt a strong call to serve, and every time I entered the church, I felt I was not answering my call, so I applied for the permanent Diaconate with great hope of

servicing. I had an interview with the bishop's ordination minister, and I was turned down because I have school-age children at home. It was a severe blow to how I felt about my place in the Catholic Church. I had to ask, "am I doing enough?" I felt like I could do more, and I wanted to use the apologetic education I just received to serve God. I searched for a place, and no one was willing to talk to me. A Roman Catholic priest told me to look to the Episcopal Church. I did. I tried. No one would meet with me or call me back except Rev. Jo at the Church of the Resurrection in Alexandria.

I am now a full member of the Episcopal Church, and a member of the Church of the Resurrection. I was accepted into the Theology Diploma Program at Virginia Theological Seminary just over the summer. I hope to eventually make the move from this program to a Masters of Divinity and a PhD program. I would like to pursue becoming a New Testament Specialist. My dream is to serve as a Priest in the Episcopal Church.

There's a lot more to my story but not enough room here to tell it. Please ask me about my family: how I met my wife Kim Ngoc, the night of Olivia's birth and the deer, and Brooklynn's talk with the Very Rev. Ian Markham, Dean of Virginia Theological Seminary.

~ "Maxi" Maxwell

Saying “Yes” to serving on the Vestry

I came to Resurrection five years ago joining my partner Carolyn McDonald, who has been a part of the church for many years. I came to the church from St. Francis, Great Falls, which is a church with a larger congregation and thus many more people to tap for a Vestry assignment. At St. Francis, over a period of some 30 years, I had served in many committee and Vestry assignments as well as regional and diocesan jobs. These multi-faceted jobs have given me the knowledge and skills, I believe, needed to serve successfully on the Vestry at Resurrection.

When I came to Resurrection, we were in the throws of getting the new church ready after the construction of The Spire, a seminal and very courageous work by a small

congregation. And I must point out, a work not tried by many other, larger congregations.

My first introduction to work at Resurrection was the reclamation of the Memorial Garden which was overrun by several years of weed growth and neglect during the construction. Working in the garden with a team of dedicated parishioners, I saw the spirit of the church in action and developed friendships with a number of dedicated people. This experience excited me about the Spirit working in Resurrection.

I also was a part of a small working group that began after the Congregational Annual Meeting at the end of 2023 where we decided to look at ways to use our investment fund to help our neighbors in a way that

mirrored the spirit behind the Spire decision. I want to see us use our talents and treasures to the Glory of God and in service of those who are less fortunate than we are. This is why I decided to say “Yes” to Rev. Jo when asked me to serve on the Vestry.

~Roland Blocksom

Note: Church of the Resurrection selects its list of people to ask, in order, by pulling the names of all eligible people randomly. We are delighted that Ken Gay, John Kirk, and Amanda Vann joined Roland in saying “yes” to Vestry service, joining Courtenay Brinckerhoff, David Ewing, Cheryl McBeth, Gbehlee Savice, Maureen Bryant, Judy Isaacs, Dan Parker, and Kat Turner on the 2025 Vestry.



Roland Blocksom

We hosted Cookie University

On Friday, January 24, about 30 Girl Scouts were at Church of the Resurrection for Cookie University. This is a program where older Girl Scouts teach younger ones how to hold a successful cookie sale. The program included: setting sales goals, using social media, in-person sales, safety, money management, business ethics, running a cookie booth, and cookie tasting.

Baby Jesus made a special guest appearance, though we can't say for sure what his favorite cookie was. The Girl Scouts enjoyed visiting Church of the Resurrection. Some came to our church on February 2 to deliver cookies that you all previously had ordered for yourselves or the Food Pantry. They all plan to be at Scout Sunday at 9:00 am on February 9.

~ Coral Childs



Members and leaders of the West End Girl Scout troops at Resurrection on January 24

Nurturing our hearts: A journey of health and faith



Eleonora Gafton

Our hearts are the center of our physical well-being and the core of our spiritual lives. February is the perfect month to reflect on this vital organ that holds our spiritual wisdom.

By now, all of us have forgotten our New Year's resolutions; if we were so gung-ho on our commitment to work out daily or find an exercise that supports our daily routine, eat better, and be more present to our own needs, it seemed so long ago.

I wanted to offer a few gentle reminders to nurture our heart health, which is the center of our well-being.



Physical Heart Health

Here are some key practices to keep our hearts strong:

- Balanced Diet:** Eating various fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help reduce the risk of heart disease. Limiting saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium is also essential.
- Regular Exercise:** Engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week can significantly

improve heart health. Activities like walking, cycling, and swimming are excellent choices. Yoga or Thai Chi are also excellent options for flexibility.

Stress Management:

Chronic stress can negatively impact our heart health. Deep breathing, meditation, and time in nature can help manage stress levels.

Spiritual reflection. As we care for our physical hearts, let us also focus on our spiritual hearts. The Bible reminds us in Proverbs 4:23, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Our spiritual well-being is intertwined with our physical health; nurturing one can positively impact the other.

- Prayer and Meditation:** Spending time in prayer and meditation can bring peace to our hearts and minds. It allows us to connect with God and find solace in his presence.

- Community and Fellowship:** Engaging with our

church community provides support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. Sharing our joys and burdens with others strengthens our spiritual hearts.

3. Acts of Kindness:

Serving others and performing acts of kindness can fill our hearts with joy and purpose. It reflects God's love and compassion in our daily lives.

Gratitude: Cultivating a heart of gratitude helps us focus on the blessings in our lives. It shifts our perspective from what we lack to what we have, fostering contentment and peace.

In conclusion, let us commit to nurturing our physical and spiritual hearts. By embracing healthy habits and deepening our faith, we can experience the fullness of life God intends for us. May our hearts be strong, our spirits be uplifted, and our lives be a testament to God's love and grace.

Blessings,

~Eleonora Gafton

Clergy & Staff

Rector

[The Rev. Jo J. Belser](#)

Deacon

[The Rev. Theresa Lewallen](#)

Priest Associate

[The Rev. Dr. Susan Ackley Lukens](#)

Pianist

Michael Lewallen

Bookkeeper

Holly Zarazinski

Consultant

Maryellen Tibbs

Parish

Administrator

Angie Armwood

Seminarians

Kate Mumey

Diane Kyle

Sexton

Beltway Cleaning, Inc.

Michael Lewallen joins staff

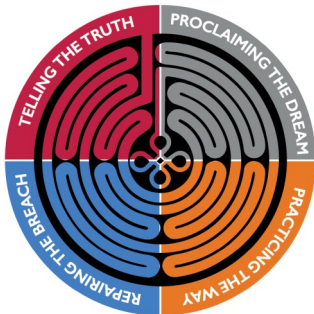
Great news: Michael Lewallen will join our Resurrection staff as our Sunday pianist, beginning February 16. He will play at both the 9:00 and 10:30 am service. Carolyn McDonald will continue to conduct the choir.



Living our baptismal promises

The Episcopal Church's focus of Becoming Beloved Community uses the labyrinth marked by four quadrants as an image and guide. In a labyrinth, we walk a twisting and turning path into the center and walk the same path back.

Those quadrants align with our baptismal promises found on pages 304-305 in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Resurrection's Racial Justice and Healing Ministry plans its offerings based on our call as a community to live out the teachings of Jesus through our baptismal promises.



The Episcopal Church's Web site provides some clear connections and actions built on Jesus' teachings in the gospels. Each of us makes a baptismal promise. The parish community provides ways to live out that promise with the support of each other and with God's help.

Baptismal Promise: *Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?*

Truth-telling Quadrant
Reconciliation, healing,

*and new life require **telling the truth** about The Episcopal Church's racial composition and complicity in systems of racial justice and injustice, past and present.*

Baptismal Promise: *Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?*

Proclamation Quadrant
*We gather to publicly reckon and share about the history and reality of race, and to **proclaim our dream of Beloved Community** through prayer, preaching, conversation and public witness.*

Baptismal Promise: *Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?*

Formation Quadrant
*We are always **practicing and being formed in Jesus' way of healing love**, especially as he calls us to cross racial, cultural and ethnic lines, to examine structures of oppression and their impact on our own and others' lives, and to grow as ambassadors of reconciliation and healing in the world.*

Baptismal Promise: *Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?*

Justice Quadrant
We participate in the repair and restoration of communities and institutions that struggle to flourish because of White dominant systems our churches and

leaders helped to bless and build.

Racial Justice and Healing Team: We remember that the Anglican Church—our ancestor denomination in America—was the originator of enslavement in what is now Virginia and displaced the Indigenous people who lived here. Our ministry offers opportunities to learn about, study, and participate in events that acknowledge the truth of the City's history in enslavement, Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and redlining. We also draw the connections between that history and the present and identify where the Episcopal Church—including through historic parishes—originated or has been complicit in racial injustice. We invite members of Resurrection to participate in justice work across the Commonwealth and in the City of Alexandria.

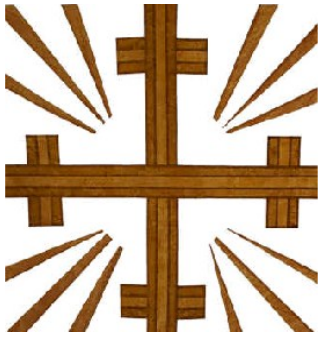
In the coming year, we will continue to invite you to be part of conversations, prayer, and public witness as we participate in our own healing and repairing the breach in our community and institutions.

Join us beginning on February 26, 5:00 pm for a potluck dinner and discussion of *The False White Gospel* by the Rev. Jim Wallis. Please let Rev. Theresa know if you plan to participate in this multi-session discussion.

~ The Rev. Theresa Lewallen, Deacon



The Rev.
Theresa Lewallen



Church of the Resurrection

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Emily Ewing

About InSpire

InSpire is the monthly newsletter of the Church of the Resurrection, describing the people of our congregation and our faith journey together. The following individuals contributed to this issue of *InSpire*:

- The Rev. Jo Belser
- Roland Blocksom
- Coral Childs
- David Ewing
- Emily Ewing
- Lea Fowlie, editor
- Lenore Funkhouser, photos
- Eleonora Gafton
- The Rev. Theresa Lewallen
- David "Maxi" Maxwell

Church of the Resurrection serves the people in the Beauregard Corridor of the City of Alexandria, home to many recent immigrants. In April 2021, Resurrection completed an eight-year mission to provide 113 units of affordable housing to its community.

West End Food Pantry news

Thanks be to God, with your help we now have fed 73,740 people in 19,852 families since the pantry first opened in October 2016

Three churches participated in the Advent Box drive for the West End Food Pantry: Church of the Resurrection, St James United Methodist Church, and Fairlington Presbyterian Church. Thanks to the generosity of the parishioners of these churches, the pantry received much-needed and hard-to-get food items. We now have enough soup to give out for the rest of the winter and are well stocked with shelf-stable items. First Christian Church collected money to help buy eggs for the pantry.

We welcomed Lenore Funkhouser and Roland Blocksom to our pantry work crew. Lenore will be helping on Monday mornings and Roland will be working on Fridays.

Kat Turner has retired from the Dawn Patrol. Thank you, Kat, for all the work you have done over the years. Welcome to Ellie Harter and John Kitt from Fairlington Presbyterian Church, who joined the Dawn Patrol.

Monday night teams: Peggy and Al Tiedemann have resigned from Team 2. Thank you both for all the hard work. David Wynne has volunteered to help. We



Some of our Advent boxes awaiting blessing on December 29

now have four people on each team, instead of five. If our numbers of guests continue to increase and the teams seem overwhelmed, we may put out a call for help.

The number of guests on Monday nights has been lower the last few weeks - I think due to the holidays, the snow, and the extreme cold. However, the number of guests spiked on the last Monday of January, and the number of guests may return to normal.

Due to the Bird Flu, we are not getting eggs and very

little chicken from ALIVE! (they can't get these items either). These are our two most popular food items (other than Halal meat); however, the guests are very gracious and understanding.

If anyone has grocery bags with handles, please don't recycle them; the pantry could use them. We now must buy them as ALIVE! no longer has bags to give us.

~Emily Ewing