

InSpire

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Baptism: Saying “yes” to God and trusting him

A welcome to the Warren-Walker family

On February 15 at the 10:00 am service, we baptized Talisha Walker and three of her and Joshua Warren’s children: Summer, Armani, and India.

The practice of baptism is ancient, but the Christian sacrament began with Jesus and the early church. It is saying ‘Yes’ to God to be baptized.

Many years ago, and a different version of myself, I was in control, hands on the steering wheel of life, and then tragic things happened. A personal crisis, a loss of a parent, and a marriage on the rocks. I was driving with an employee, Charlene, to a client meeting. I was discussing what I was going through. A lot of confusion and vitriol came out. Charlene listened to me. I said, totally exasperated, “What is the Truth, Charlene.” She paused and in her unmistakable southern accent said, “You will find it [truth] in the Bible.”

Six months later I was Baptized. I was “all in.” I said Yes to God. I consider this a distinct pivot point in life. A spiritual birthday and celebration.

The mother Talisha (“T”) and her three little ones went



What a joyous day on February 15

through the sacred and holy ceremony with grace and poise. The whole congregation sponsored them and cheered. So, what did we do that day?

Part 1: The Beliefs

The Covenant begins with a series of questions that walk through the Apostles’ Creed. The person being baptized affirms belief in:

- God the Father
- Jesus Christ—His life, death, resurrection, and role as Savior
- The Holy Spirit
- The Church
- Forgiveness
- Resurrection and eternal life

Before attending church and being baptized, I struggled to

affirm my belief in God. It was only after repeated setbacks and finally surrendering control that I learned to trust God. This marked the start of my Christian journey.

Part 2: The Five Promises (How Episcopalians live our faith)

After the Creed, the Covenant asks five questions about how the baptized person will live. Each one is answered with: **“I will, with God’s help.”**

Here’s what each promise is about:

- **Continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship**
 - Stay connected to the church

(Continued on page 8)



The Rev'd Jo Belser

“... the service on March 15 will end with the ‘Litany of Leave-taking.’”

Saying thank you and farewell to Rev'd Theresa

Our March 15 worship will include an Archdeacon and formal leave-taking

We are entering a season of farewells and leave-takings. On March 15, we will celebrate and thank the Rev'd Theresa Lewallen for her time with us, leading us in creating a Racial Justice and Healing Ministry.

We at Church of the Resurrection are very “fortunate” to have benefitted from Rev'd Theresa's ministry here. In May 2021, newly arrived in our new church building, I wrote to Bishop Susan Goff outlining this church's need to stay outwardly focused in mission and requesting assignment of a deacon to assist in this effort. I specifically requested Rev'd Theresa because, “she already has strong connections in the City of Alexandria, the teaching gift that commands respect in Resurrection's congregations, and the diaconal experience to make an immediate impact in this setting. However, I know that Theresa would be ideal wherever you place her.” I didn't mention Rev'd Theresa's great heart and pastoral presence because Bishop Goff and I both knew this already about Theresa—as you now know.

You also know what a great “job” Rev'd Theresa has done here, helping us to become beloved community inside and outside our walls through racial justice and healing. As with the “work”



of all deacons, the proof of her time here will be in the continuation of this ministry, should you choose to prioritize it.

Deaconal leave-takings are prescribed by the Bishop's “customary” (instructions). First, the Venerable Holly Hanback will be the preacher. She is an ordained deacon, one of two archdeacons appointed by Bishop Stevenson for our Diocese. In this capacity, Archdeacon Hanback “holds delegated administrative authority from the Bishop to support, grow, and oversee the diaconate, acting as a key advisor and liaison.” In addition, she serves at St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church in Leesburg, a mission church with significant ministry by and with both English- and Spanish-speaking parishioners.

Second, the service on March 15 will end with the “Litany of Leave-taking.” In this short liturgy, I and the Racial Justice and Healing

lay leaders will name what Rev'd Theresa has brought to Resurrection. The congregational response is “Go with our blessing,” followed by you promising to, “release [her] with our blessing, confident that [she] will hold [her] love for us in [her] heart, as we will hold our love for [her] in ours.” Acting on Bishop Stevenson's behalf, Archdeacon Hanback will then formally release Rev'd Theresa from having an active role in the ministry of this congregation and charging her with discerning what God is calling her to do next in his name.

After this, the service will end and we will have a time of fellowship, exchanging of stories, and perhaps tears. I plan to share the first story and Kat Turner plans to share the second one; if you would like to share one also, please let me know.

~ Rev'd Jo

Is “unsettled” the new paradigm for churches?

Last fall I attended the annual Gift of Place Zoom conference presented by Trinity Church in New York City. The focus of this conference is Mission Real Estate Development and it encourages churches to think about ways their property assets can be used to serve God’s people beyond a Sunday morning worship service.

At Resurrection, we don’t have to look very far to see examples of this approach: at The Spire or up the street at our Food Pantry housed by St. James United Methodist Church. While the purpose of the conference is how to use church property, a number of speakers went beyond that to reflect on what church is and should be not just within its buildings, but beyond them as well.

One of the presenters at the conference was the Rt. Rev. Craig William Loya, the Bishop of Minnesota. His presentation dealt with his belief that we are in a transformational era about how we are church. One of his points was the traditional way that churches are supported through contributions from their members may not be sustainable for all churches as congregational size decreases and capital needs of aging facilities increase. He believes that churches need to look beyond their own membership to redefine the community of God’s

people that they are called to serve. How does he propose we respond to such changes? He advises churches to “settle in to being unsettled.” He acknowledges that change can be hard but suggests that we should be thankful that we have been chosen in this time and place to navigate these changes for God and the church. Be open to new possibilities.

I confess that as I listened to his remarks, I felt a little smug. After all, Resurrection saw this coming before many other churches and responded with our Bold Idea to redevelop our property, provide affordable housing for our community, and identify ourselves as a flexible, resilient church that manages change well. Very comfortable, and not at all unsettling! Well, maybe it was unsettling at the time, but look how well we came through it!

Some five months later both Bishop Loya and I have had occasion to take a deep breath as we face unexpected changes. For Resurrection, the well-earned retirement of Rev’d Jo has us facing a future with new clergy leadership. This element of uncertainty is unsettling and uncomfortable, but we need to realize that her departure gives us permission to think in new ways about how we view church and how we relate to our community. The work of the

Discernment Committee will help us discover how we wish to navigate this transition.

When Bishop Loya spoke last fall, I am sure he was not expecting his church and people to become unsettled in the way that the city of Minneapolis has faced this winter. He has responded by speaking in the public arena about moral responsibilities. He has been a leader in the peaceful protests against harsh immigration enforcement policies seen in his city. He has described himself as weary, weighed down, angry, and heartbroken, saying, “It’s hard to overstate the magnitude of the random and reckless cruelty that we are seeing and the depth of the fear that nearly everyone is living with all the time.” He is a living witness to what it means to be the church beyond Sunday morning and to speak for people beyond those in the pews. Change may be unsettling, but it can also be transformational, and churches need to remain open to that possibility.

For Resurrection, our challenge is to settle in to being unsettled for the next few months and work together for the future we want. One more piece of advice from Bishop Loya, “You cannot count God out. God will show up.”

~ Kat Turner



Kat Turner

“[Minnesota Bishop Loya said] we are in a transformational era about how we are church.”

Where we are in discerning a new rector

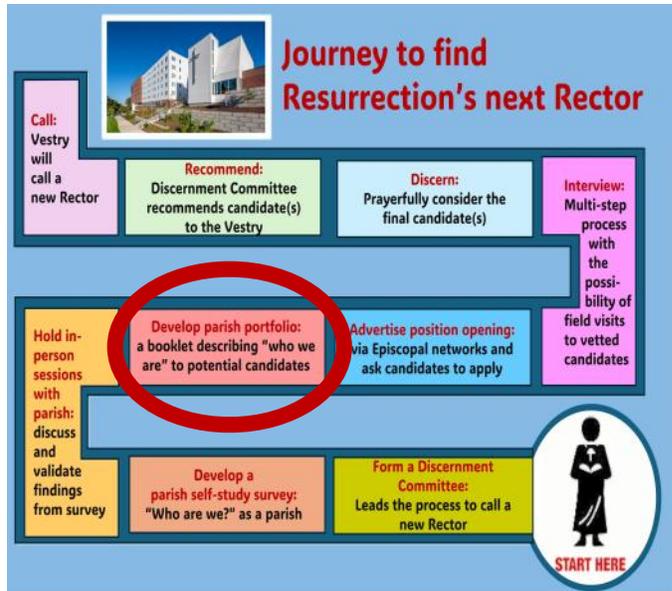


Betsy Faga

February was a full month for all of us as we shared our thoughts during our discernment process—a process that continues in March. First, a very big thanks for those who have participated thus far in our Forums and surveys. The Forums on February 8 and 22 were attended by 21 parishioners each time and 36 parishioners have returned Survey #1 as of this writing. Here's what we heard:

Sunday, February 8 -- Our Forum was held in three small groups and focused on when we feel close to God at Resurrection and what might enhance that going forward. Not surprisingly, there was some commonality among the groups. We feel close to God through:

- Sermons
- Communion
- No altar rail
- Hymns and responsive prayers
- Diversity of clergy
- Pageantry of service, Maundy Thursday/Easter Vigil services
- Silences
- Looking at the cross
- Setting altar as part of the altar guild
- Welcome of children
- Forums
- Outreach: Lazarus ministry, food pantry, events for Spire children
- Building of the new church and apartments
- Sitting and working in the Memorial Garden



- Feeling of love, sense of purpose, sense of humor with the congregation
- Being welcomed after absence
- Can-do attitude
- Learn from our differences
- How we embrace nature
- Small but mighty congregation
- Welcome people who are different from us
- Strengthen ties with Virginia Theological Seminary
- Improve Web site and the sound system

Sunday, February 8 – Survey #1 distributed in church and by e-mail requested information on demographics and the importance of various aspects of church life.

Sunday, February 15 – Forum was held as one group and focused on where God is calling us to go in the next few years. We heard:

What we want to enhance:

- More and different Bible study opportunities
- Start men's group/book group
- More participatory prayers, more morning prayer options
- Continue to encourage volunteers
- Provide individual kneelers
- More and varied outreach
- Evangelize among neighbors
- New members, especially with children
- Implement ideas of the February 8 Forum
- Traditional services
- Pass the Peace more intentionally
- Instructional services
- Sermon discussions
- Continue high level of

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Where we are in discerning a new rector

(Continued from page 4)

- energy from clergy
- Music Director who can work with children
- Relational meet ups
- Enhance caregiving to parishioners
- Continue strong outreach
- Create attractive place for younger and retirees
- Focus on those within walking distance
- Continue to welcome all ages and nationalities
- Be concerned about the environment
- Watch development in the area
- Further develop relationship with Goodwin House Alexandria

Sunday, March 1 – Survey #2 was distributed in person and was sent by e-mail to all parishioners during the week. This survey asks for input on the attributes and qualities of importance in a new priest and the ministries in which each of us is involved.

Sunday, March 1 – Thanks to Lea Fowlie, a map identifying the location where parishioners live is now available for viewing.

Here's what's coming :

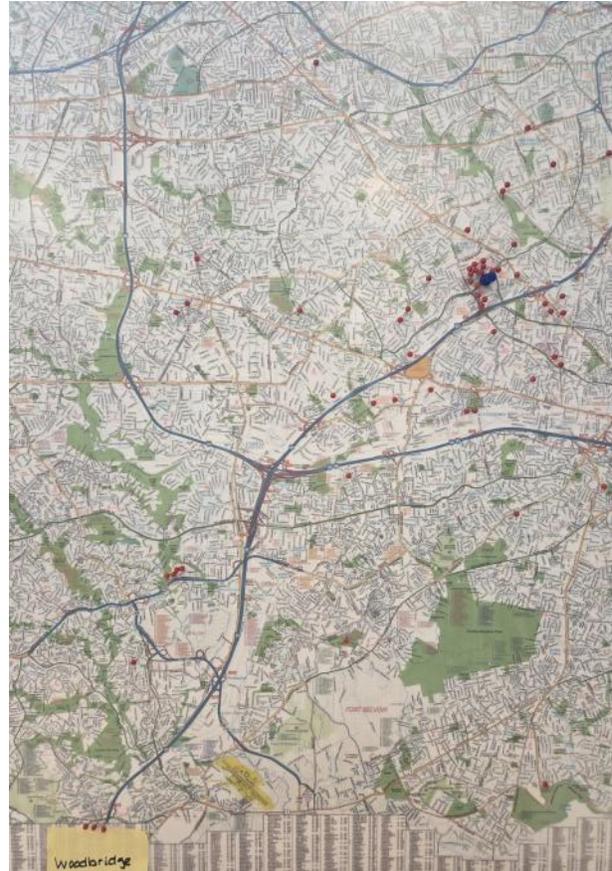
- **Wednesday, March 4, 5:00 pm** – Zoom conversation with parishioners unable to attend in-person Forums.
- **Sunday, March 8** – Small groups after each

service to share the abilities and qualities of importance in our next priest.

- **Sunday, March 8, 7:00 pm** – Zoom conversation with parishioners unable to attend in-person Forums.
- Members of the Discernment Committee are recording the results of Survey #1 and will provide a summary of the results.
- Members of the Discernment Committee will be recording the results of Survey #2 and will provide a summary of the results.
- **Tuesday, March 17** – Discernment Committee meeting with the Rev'd Will Dickinson, the Diocesan Transition Minister, to receive a briefing on how to proceed with the development of the Parish Portfolio (formerly called the Parish Profile).
- Committee begins compiling the research that informs the Portfolio.

Dear God, lead us and guide us along the way.

~ Betsy Faga, Chair, on behalf of the Discernment Committee: Coral Childs, Patrick Coleman, Lea Fowlie, and Verleah Kosloske



Placeholder for a photo of your great map of where parishioners live

A story of abundance

Resurrection again supports the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria

In February, the Vestry unanimously approved a \$20,000 Abundance Ministry grant to the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria (SFA). This was a decision rooted in our belief that opening doors for young people is one of the clearest ways to honor Christ's call to love our neighbors. For nearly 40 years, SFA has ensured that every young Alexandrian, regardless of family income, has a real chance to pursue college, technical training, or career preparation. SFA's work is steady, faithful, and transformative.



David Ewing giving our Abundance Ministry grant to Jasmine Malone of SFA

Half of our grant supports SFA's general scholarship and advising mission. The other half will fund scholarships honoring Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas, the two young Black Alexandrians lynched in 1897 and 1899. These scholarships, created in partnership with the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, ensure that the lives of these teens are remembered with solemnity and hope. One scholarship supports students pursuing college degrees; the other those entering skilled trades and technical schools. Together, they reflect the diversity of Alexandria's students and affirm that every path—academic or technical—can be a path of dignity, purpose, and promise.

The impact of SFA's work is extraordinary. Last year

alone, 215 seniors from Alexandria City High School received nearly \$700,000 in first-year scholarships, with multi-year awards totaling \$2.5 million. Nearly 70% of these students will be the first in their families to attend college in the United States. This year, over 430 students have applied. Each has a story: a family encouraged, a dream made possible, a future widened.

Members of the Abundance Committee participate in SFA events throughout the year and are grateful for the Vestry's continued support. But the work of abundance is never the work of a committee alone—it is the work of a congregation listening for where God is calling us next. As we continue discerning how best to share the gifts entrusted to us, we invite

your wisdom. Do you know of a Christ-centered organization whose work embodies compassion, justice, or mercy? We welcome your suggestions. The required form to get things moving is available at the church in the handout rack next to the office door (or online through e-Notes).

If you have questions, please reach out to one of the Abundance Ministry members: John Kirk, Co-Chair; David Ewing, Co-Chair; Courtenay Brickerhoff; Carolyn McDonald; and Dan Parker.

Thank you for helping Resurrection live our vision of abundance, where remembrance becomes opportunity, generosity becomes hope, and every child of God is met with the promise of a future.

~ David Ewing

Clergy & Staff

Rector

[The Rev'd Jo J. Belsler](#)

Deacon

[The Rev'd Theresa C. Lewallen](#)

Pianist

Virginia Sircy

Seminarians

Kate Mumey
Torie Linner

Bookkeeper

Holly Zarazinski

Parish

Administrator

[Angie Armwood](#)

Sexton

Beltway Cleaning, Inc.

Our work together in retrospect

Rev'd Theresa shared a fond and thankful farewell

Normally, my *InSpire* article focuses on Racial Justice and Healing work we are doing in and with the community. Given that this is my final article for you, it will be a bit different. In early 2022, Bishop Goff discerned along with me and Rev'd Jo that my next call was to serve as deacon for Church of the Resurrection. I was grateful that Rev'd Jo invited me to enter the new chapter of this community. I remain grateful to this day that I've been able to worship with you, walk through joy and grief together, and work alongside our neighbors to learn and grow as individuals and as a parish.

Through our work together, I have learned so much about engaging in the work of racial justice and healing. I appreciate that we have explored and dug deeply into the injustices perpetrated by our City, our Church, and our Nation. We have learned about those who have worked to change unjust systems and who work toward healing of the wounds through reconciliation and reparations.

I have been changed in ways that I know will become more apparent after we share our final farewells on March 15. Some of our work together stands out to me now. I continue to read and remember our Stations of the Cross based on sites of pain, oppression, and death in



Remembering Benjamin Thomas in 2023, a young Alexandrian lynched here in 1899

Alexandria. I have shared the booklet with many other churches and programs. It is an example of the spiritual writings of members of Resurrection alongside the events of Jesus final days and his death. We gathered with other Alexandrians for a pivotal moment in the remembrance of the lynching of Benjamin Thomas when a new marker was placed where the jail was. We walked together along the brutal path Benjamin was dragged and beaten before he was hung.

Our Service of Commitment and Repentance epitomized Resurrection's collaborative nature when we joined with St. Martin de Porres for a Eucharist Service. Our food pantry's collaborative work must be witnessed to be appreciated. I am very proud that we were able to provide "Know Your Rights" cards for our neighbors and meet with residents at Southern Towers.

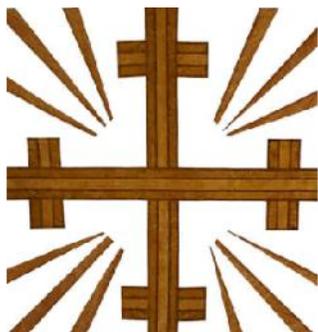
Now to answer questions that I've been asked. For two months or so, I will be on a sabbatical. For me that primarily means not having a schedule to serve at the altar on Sundays. I intend to visit my family members up north and in Florida. I will still have my paid position and my diocesan leadership role, so I won't be fully "off." During this time off, Bishop Stevenson and I will discern my next placement. I am not moving, so you may see me around the City.

As I mentioned in my last sermon (the 8:00 am version), you show God's glory through the work that you do, the prayers that you say, and the openness to others that you exhibit in the building and in the world. Thank you for reminding me of God's glory in all that you are and do.

*~The Rev'd
Theresa Lewallen*



*The Rev'd
Theresa Lewallen*



Church of the Resurrection

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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'd Jo Belser
- David Ewing
- Betsy Faga and the Discernment Committee
- Lea Fowlie, editor
- The Rev'd Theresa Lewallen
- Dan Parker
- Kat Turner

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.

Baptism: Saying “yes” to God and trusting him

(Continued from page 1)

- Participate in worship and communion
- Learn Scripture and grow spiritually
- **Persevere in resisting evil**
 - Reject what is wrong
 - When you fall into sin, turn back to God
- **Proclaim the Good News of Christ**
 - Share God's love through words and actions
 - Live in a way that reflects Jesus
- **Seek and serve Christ in all persons**
 - Treat every human being with dignity
 - Practice compassion and kindness
- **Strive for justice & peace**
 - Work for fairness
 - Stand against oppression
 - Respect the dignity of every human being



Joshua Warren, Talisha Walker, and three of their children: Summer, Armani, and India

May the Warren-Walker family be Blessed. May the Church of the Resurrection love them as we are commanded and to help them grow in their faith. In name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

~ Dan Parker

NOTE: The children's older step-sister, Haley, wants to be baptized. Perhaps we will have another opportunity soon to share in this joy.