

InSpire

Holy Week and Easter at Resurrection

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What a solemn three days in Holy Week this year, with noonday services Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

On Maundy Thursday we remembered Jesus' Last Supper and his warning that his disciples would be "sifted" but, if they repented they would strengthen their fellow disciples. This warning seemed especially appropriate this year, given the change that is coming to the Resurrection Community.

Good Friday is always very stark, and this year's service was no exception even though the message was that Jesus' Crucifixion would lead to life, hope, and promise. The music was especially glorious this year, aided by Virginia Sircy at the organ and piano, and Alexis Brenan on the violin.

Holy Saturday saw us in our "Upper Room," where we waited in hope for what would come next. Given our hope, we offered healing prayers there.

What a Spirit-filled day on Easter Sunday! We got to baptize Haley Warren and sing, sing, sing our joy that Jesus' Resurrection, though in the past and completed, is still ongoing today. Our

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The Rev'd Jo Belser

Thank you, Resurrection

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you. (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

I wrote this, my last newsletter article as your Rector, on Tuesday of Holy Week. The worship was planned, the music selected and rehearsed, most of the logistics of the services were in place, the five sermons I was to preach were “wrapped,” and the six services between and my retirement had been planned and four of the bulletins printed. It is in *this* moment when I became deeply aware that I will be retired in less than two weeks.

end as our paths forward in this life will diverge.

As I retire, I am convinced that my work here at Church of the Resurrection is done. I am equally convinced that *your* work here is far from over. Look around you at your church: new members, new energy, new joy. Yes, after April 12 there will be a season of change while the church’s Discernment Committee completes its work and the Vestry calls a new Rector. And yet, I know

love you have shared with us, we thank you.

I leave you in the very able hands of our wardens, Kat Turner and John Kirk, and the other members of the Vestry. They all, relying on each of you and what Kat calls Resurrection’s “hive mind,” will guide the church through a season of supply priests until your new Rector arrives and gets to know and love you, as I do.

Working together through your interim period between Rectors, you will see—as I see—how God has given each person here to the Resurrection Community because they each bring some precious gift that the Community needs to do what God is calling it to do. As you get to know each person better, particularly our newest members, you will discover their gifts. The goal is to discover what new ministries God is calling you all into together.

Meanwhile, I will look for you at our one service at 10:00 am on April 12, where we can all rejoice at our time together. Thank you for your love and your flexibility. Remember an opinion that seminarian Kate Mumey share—which I echo—“Whoever gets to be your next priest will be very favored by God.”

~ Rev'd Jo

“I [am] filled with two deep feelings: gratitude and grief.”



At the 2015 installation of Rev'd Jo as Rector (there is no photo of her first service here in 2012)

As I have prepared for our grand farewell on April 12, I have been filled with two deep feelings: gratitude and grief. I am very grateful for the privilege of serving you for the past 14 years as your pastor and priest. I am also grieving the changes that leaving will bring: leaving each of you, especially, as we each move into the next phase of our lives. Our relationships will change or

you will be aided by your confident hope in Christ Jesus, who works for the renewal of all things.

I, too, plan to rest in this Christ-centered hope: rest for a season and then see what new adventures God has in store for Lenore and me. Lenore has travel plans that your very generous farewell gifts will fund; for that and all the leave-taking

Are we ready for change?

The first house I remember living in was on a street two blocks long, home to about a dozen elementary school kids. Behind the houses was a large plot of undeveloped land with tall grass, bushes, and trees. We called it The Field, and it was a great place for Hide-and-Seek. I don't know what the protocol was in your neighborhood, but on Vincent Road the Seeker would count to 100 with closed eyes and then shout, "Ready or not, here I come!"

Ready or not, April 12 is coming. We know what that day will bring. The church (and the parking lot!) will be full. We will have Rev'd Jo at the altar one last time for a glorious worship service. A choir will lead us in joyful hymns. The Rev'd Canon Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr. will preach an inspiring sermon. There will be good food and fellowship. There will be cake. And there will be laughter and probably tears as we send Rev'd Jo and Lenore on the next stage of their journey. Ready or not, April 12 is coming.

But what about April 13? Have we thought about what happens then? Deep inside, we know it will be different, but are we ready? Are we ready to make the changes that will take Resurrection on the next stage of its own journey with God?

What will be different? Well, we know there will be a different person at the altar on Sunday. Not just not-Rev'd Jo, but different from

week to week. Through July we will have seven different celebrants, eight different preachers. Are we ready to change and be open to differences in style, presentation, and message? Or will we sit in the sanctuary and think, "This is not the way it used to be?"

Our communications within the parish will be different, too. Our weekly *e-Notes* will continue, and so will *InSpire*, but the latter will have a radically different



format (Publisher, the program we have used, is being discontinued). Our Web site is being redesigned to present a more contemporary look for both potential Rectors and parishioners. And when Publisher is discontinued, we will have to find a new format for our service bulletins. Are we ready for these changes or will we find them unsettling?

Recently the Vestry has become aware of just how much behind-the-scenes work we have relied on our priest to do. While we are

willing to take on some of these tasks, we lack some of the skills and also we don't want to preempt a new Rector who will have their own ideas about how things might be done going forward. At this point we can't even anticipate what changes we might have to make. But there will be changes. Are we ready? Are *you* ready? Will we roll with the punches and work together to keep Resurrection on an even keel, mixing metaphors as necessary to get things done? Or will we bemoan every difference, every departure from the expected, and wish for a past that cannot be recaptured?

When speaking about Resurrection, Rev'd Jo would frequently describe our church and its people as flexible and resilient. Resurrection has been described as a change-maker. These attributes may be seriously challenged in the coming weeks and months as we try to find not a new identity, but perhaps a new way of presenting ourselves to the world. We know who we are at our core; the Discernment Committee has been asking us important questions that will soon be distilled into a parish portfolio that we will use to invite clergy who share our vision, our core values, and commitment to ministry to consider coming to Resurrection. And bringing with them still

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Kat Turner

"But what about April 13? Have we thought about what happens then?"

Heat and eat: funds to assist our neighbors

In a season when the needs of our community continue to deepen, Resurrection has once again responded with compassion and resolve. On March 27, the Vestry approved an Abundance Committee recommendation to gift two organizations that will provide immediate, tangible support to our neighbors facing housing insecurity and hunger: \$30,000 to Christ Church's West End Lazarus Financial Ministry and \$10,000 to Carpenter's Shelter.

The West End Lazarus Financial Ministry (currently housed at Fairlington Presbyterian Church) provides financial assistance and counseling to Alexandria residents in danger of eviction, utility shutoff, or the inability to pay medical bills. Trained financial counselors—including several from Resurrection—meet with 16 clients each week. Thus far in 2026, the Lazarus Financial Ministry has assisted 148 clients with rent, utilities, and medical bills. With an average investment of over \$425 per client, the ministry has provided \$73,302.26 this year in direct support to our neighbors.

The needs served by the Lazarus Ministry are growing. The combined effect of reductions in government assistance programs and inflation hits the working poor with particular force. The

infrastructure of the Lazarus Ministry is strong and time-tested, but it needs resources to help keep our neighbors housed, keep their lights on, and help them manage medical expenses so they can continue working and thriving.

Carpenter's Shelter is a leading provider of services to support people experiencing and at risk of homelessness in Alexandria, offering a continuum of care that supports individuals and families from crisis to long-term stability. In 2024, the organization celebrated its 35th anniversary—a testament to decades of partnership, innovation, and steadfast commitment to ensuring that every person has a safe place to call home.

Across all programs, Carpenter's Shelter served 816 individuals in 2024, including 309 children—a 30% increase from the previous year. Its two emergency shelters provided safe, dignified housing to 326 people, with nearly 80% of Hoffman Center residents and 50% of ACS residents transitioning into permanent housing. In total, the organization delivered 25,000 bed nights of shelter and achieved a 35% overall housing exit rate.

The requested \$10,000 will provide beds and essential kitchen supplies. It is fitting that we support these needs in particular, because



Christ Church's Rector receiving our check for its ministry

Resurrection was instrumental in helping to begin the shelter and has been a long time partner in its mission by preparing and serving dinner the first Sunday of alternate months. Maureen Bryant, our current Shelter Dinner Coordinator, was pleased that a portion of the donation will be earmarked for new kitchen utensils. While she and our other volunteers always make do with what is available, new supplies will make it easier to prepare and serve meals to shelter residents.

As we offer these gifts, we participate in the quiet, steady work of God's abundance—meeting people at the most vulnerable points in their lives and helping them take the next faithful step toward stability and hope. May these grants strengthen our partners, lighten the burdens of our neighbors, and remind us that when we share what we have, we become signs of God's mercy in a world that hungers for it.

*~ Courtenay C. Brinckerhoff
with David Ewing*

Girl Scouts celebrate World Thinking Day with trip around the world

On March 20, we were delighted to host our local Girl Scout troop at Church of the Resurrection to celebrate World Thinking Day, an annual tradition since 1926. This year marks its 100th anniversary!

The girls embarked on a global adventure, focusing on the five World Centers of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) – safe, affordable hostels created by Girl Scouts for Girl Scouts.

Armed with their personalized passports, the girls traveled the world:

- England: They learned about Pax Lodge and made crowns in honor of the monarchy and the new King Charles III.
- Switzerland: At Our Chalet, they explored the history of St. Bernard rescues in the Alps and enjoyed a Swiss chocolate taste test.
- India: They discovered the Sangam (“coming together” in Sanskrit) World Center, learned about the nation's diversity, and colored beautiful mandalas.
- Africa (currently in Ghana): On a safari to find the traveling World Center, Kusafiri (“to journey” in Swahili), they symbolically wove paper kente “cloth.”
- Mexico: Finally, they “visited” Our Cabana and had fun making Ojos de Dios (God’s Eyes).



Our Girl Scout guests and their work



- The day concluded with a discussion about international opportunities right here in Alexandria, thank you notes to the church and Ms. Angie, and a celebratory dance party in the Memorial Garden.

Thank you, Church of the Resurrection, for helping our Girl Scouts journey around the world and celebrating 100 years of Thinking Day with us!

~ Coral Childs

Are we ready for change?

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more change, I am sure.

Think back to 2013 when Resurrection embraced the radical change of demolishing its church so that a new right-sized church and an affordable housing building could rise in its place. Think back to the days of the Covid pandemic when we met for worship on-line, and in many different places on the campus of

Virginia Theological Seminary. And think back to 2021 when we returned to our campus, uncertain whether Resurrection could thrive in this new environment. Change is not easy, but our history shows that we are not defeated by change.

I was a college classmate of Bill Clinton so I listened very closely to his Inaugural Address and I still remember the challenge that he issued

that is very applicable to Resurrection at this point in our history. “Profound and powerful forces are shaking and remaking our world, and the urgent question of our time is whether we can make Change our friend and not our enemy.”

Ready or not, April 13 is coming. And so is change.

~ Kat Turner

Clergy & Staff

Rector

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

Pianist

Virginia Sircy

Seminarian

Toric Linner

Bookkeeper

Holly Zarazinski

Parish

Administrator

[Angie Armwood](#)

Sexton

Beltway Cleaning, Inc.

Holy Week and Easter at Resurrection

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Church’s Christmas Baby Jesus even made an appearance, now wearing a shirt that says, “I am risen.”

As always, our Easter Sunday services saw new visitors, the return of old friends, great music, and an even more awesome reception after the service.

If you missed Easter Sunday at Church of the Resurrection, we will be reaching for the whole Spirit-filled vibe this Sunday, April 12. I hope to see you there as we exchange departure vows.

~ Rev’d Jo



We are beginning our *Parish Portfolio*

Rev'd Jo's retirement is now here. However, we hope that you are comforted by what we have learned from her and from the time that our diocesan transition minister, the Rev'd Will Dickinson, recently spent with us. I love Rev'd Will's words that this is a "season of change." And Rev'd Jo's words that "God will provide everything that is needed."

Sunday was Easter, our Resurrection's "name day." We wonder what new life God has prepared for us this year. We know it will start with loss and grieving. And those who were here at the start of our building project will remember how well Rev'd Jo led us through the grieving process then. However, on Easter 2021 we were resurrected in a new church and new affordable homes next door

Rev'd Will nicely laid out where the Discernment Committee will be going next. As a reminder, here's our timeline (see the image, above). Thanks to your input in our Forums, private conversations, and surveys, **the Committee is ready to begin writing the parish profile.** The required format asks for information in three major areas

- **Position Overview**, which includes our church name, our Diocese, and the position that is open.
- **Position Details** that will be prepared by the Vestry and will provide general compensation and benefits guidelines that are broad



enough to allow for negotiation with the final candidate.

- **Congregation Narrative** which will take the most time and is to be written in a storytelling fashion, not just generic phrases. It will include our character and culture as a parish, specific qualities and skills desired in our new priest, and the challenges and opportunities we see ahead.

Once a draft of the profile is completed, it will be sent to Rev'd Will for review and then, after refinement, on to the Vestry for approval. When the approval process is completed, the profile will be posted by Rev'd Will on several national websites dedicated to this purpose. He was candid about the clergy candidate pool. Since 1980, three times more clergy are retiring than are being ordained. So, there are fewer clergy looking for positions. Married clergy also generally have a household with two working partners so the needs of both partners must be considered. The positive side for us is the appeal of an urban setting with good schools.

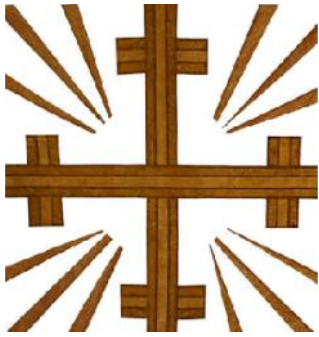
The development of the portfolio will take us through April so we're not

ready to talk about the next step yet. Rev'd Will emphasized that once candidate applications are received, the discernment committee is bound to confidentiality. This includes not divulging the names of candidates, where they are located, or even how many candidates there are. After an interview process, the discernment committee will submit only one candidate to the Vestry for its consideration. If you have questions about the process, please talk with any of us. There will be more details about the next steps in future *InSpire* articles.

Much of this article has been about process and what to expect and we want everyone to know what to expect. However, this is truly a time of discernment and leaning on our faith. Remember, we are seeking the right priest, not the first priest.

Please keep praying, listen to God and imagine what God is calling us to be.

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



Church of the Resurrection

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Notes from the Sunday School teacher



Sunday School time on March 15

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
- Coral Childs
- Gay Colyer
- Discernment Committee
- Lea Fowlie, editor/
photos
- Kat Turner

Thirty years ago, I came through the doors of Resurrection “unchurched.” My relationship with my now-husband Lou Zarfaz had just begun, which meant that I was going through many new “doors.” And attending church on Sundays was very new to me. My family enjoyed time together on Sunday, but no one suggested that we seek out a spiritual community, nor a religious education. So, while I could have dropped Lou at the door and stayed in the car, I went in and found a community and a vocation.

As others will testify, I felt warmly welcomed at Resurrection, even as I was fumbling with my hymn book and determining when to stand up and sit down. I don't remember exactly

what brought me to the Sunday school class. I had studied early childhood development and earned a teaching credential while still in California but had given up trying to find a teaching job. Now, I was the one who had to learn about the stories in the Bible.

What to teach, how to present it, and in what sequence? All that came to me over time with guidance from experienced teachers who had far more practice than I had. And it was that practice, along with the inevitable misfires that gave me confidence. Another contributor was Rev'd Jo, who gave me the freedom to find my own teaching direction. And Lou, who is a constant provider of ideas and support.

I learned that structured lessons are important. I saw it in the work of my predecessors and learned about it by teaching Godly Play lessons myself. But the biggest lesson I've learned over time has been in listening to student's responses to the stories, how their ideas are changed and shaped as they mature and develop as people. They are paying attention to each other as much as they are to me. My task is to create a safe environment for these responses. Whatever the future brings for Resurrection, I hope that we will always have a Sunday school class.

~ Gay Colyer