

InSpire

Let's talk stewardship, again!

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Our stewardship theme, "Hope and a Future," is taken from Jeremiah 29:11 which says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

This theme acknowledges that 2026 will be a transition year for Resurrection. We will continue to worship God, learn about Jesus, and put our faith into practice in our world by helping people. You also will be considering what Resurrection wants and needs in a new clergy leader after Easter 2026 to help you carry out the work that God has given you to do.

Impending clergy changes can be difficult times for congregations. However, there are additional reasons that we *might* focus on fear for our future. As I write this:

- Our country is deadlocked about policy and funding, which does not bode well for the economy, and
- Churches are getting smaller. Our own average Sunday attendance is about 20 people less today than when we left our old church building in September 2018.

And yet, we live in hope. Our recent congregational vitality survey shows that we remain vitally alive in all 13 areas tested, tops in outreach, worship, and change readiness. Together with our faith-in-action, these are all that we need to do the work that God continues to give us. Then, too, we have a regular stream of visitors and new members and you have always prioritized giving to fund the work that God has asked of us.

Given that 2026 will be transitional, our Vestry set a lowered stewardship goal this year of \$215,000 and planned to use \$54,000 from our special funds to balance the budget. At a recent Forum, our stewardship chairs (Wardens David Ewing and Kat Turner) said that this goal is achievable if everyone renews their 2025 pledge for 2026 and makes a small

increase in giving, if they can.

This pledge of money from our special funds for operations is more than a way to balance the 2026 operating budget. It is a commitment to the future of our Resurrection Community. This is important because some wonder why we need operating funds if our Abundance Ministry is giving away our savings. You can read Kat Turner's "take" on that on pages 4 and 5. I would add that there are other equally valid perspectives in the congregation.

The response to our stewardship ask so far has been outstanding, thank you. Much will be told, though, when we have heard from our other 32 pledgers.

~ The Rev'd Jo Belser

Pledge Status Report	2026
Number of pledges	21
Total amount pledged	\$ 116,418
Average pledge	\$ 5,544
Median pledge	\$ 4,200
New pledges	\$ -
Percentage of \$215K	54.1%
Pledges not yet renewed	32
If all renew "flat"	\$ 229,450
New pledges:	0
# of "flat" pledges:	1
# of increased pledges:	17
# of lowered pledges:	3



The Rev. Jo Belser

“Our Episcopal saints are not perfect, just faithful in some exemplary way.”

Let's talk about our saints

All Saints Sunday is on November 2 this year; can you name a saint?

My parents' denomination didn't recognize saints, dead or living. Theirs was a “holiness” tradition that believes Christian perfection is possible, that Christians can live a sinless life. This doctrine was largely developed by John Wesley, but it got “further refined” after my parents' denomination merged with another holiness tradition.

The two main problems with this doctrine are that it sets an unachievable standard—perfection—and it promotes self-reliance, focusing on through trying harder rather than trusting in God. In this doctrine, every Christian is a saint, but only when they achieve perfection. By popular belief, therefore, no one is a saint, which they believed was too “Popish,” a concept, anyway.

Scripture teaches that holiness is God-centered, not human-centered. In Galatians 5:22-23, the Apostle Paul taught that the holiness can be judged by what he called “the fruits of the Spirit,” namely: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, all given to us by God when we accept his Spirit's work in our lives. We understand from the salutations and greetings in Paul's letters to early Christian congregations that he considered all Christians saints.

The Episcopal Church's official definition of a saint agrees with Paul: “A holy person, a faithful Christian, one who shares life in Christ.” The Episcopal Church's Website adds, “The term may also indicate one who has been formally canonized or recognized as a saint by church authority.”

In this latter category of named saints, our Church lifts up some people whose lives are good examples of how to live a Christian life. Our Episcopal saints are not perfect, just faithful in some exemplary way. My favorite venerated saints in our Episcopal tradition had major flaws as well as their great virtues:

- Saint Jerome had a very bad temper
- Saint William Laud (a past Archbishop of Canterbury) was a bigot
- Moses of Ethiopia had been a murderer and thief.

In our Church, the people we choose as examples of how to live a Christian life were real humans, not perfect in their lives but who lived lives for Christ.

There are two reasons I am thinking about saints in this, our October newsletter issue.

- *First*, we will observe All Saints Day on Sunday, November 2, before our next issue of *InSpire* is published. I hope that you

will be at either of our worship services at 8:00 and 10:00 am that day to celebrate saints. One of our traditions on that day is to pray for people who have died in the past year. If you have someone you would like to be included in our prayers, please [let Angie Armwood know](#) before Monday, October 27.



An example of one of our saint cards

- *Second*, I will be passing out “saint cards,” each naming one of our relatively recently deceased saints and asking you to complete the card by writing on it what you remember about that person's saintliness. If you agree to complete a Resurrection Saint Card, please return the completed card to the office before October 27.

~ Rev. Jo

What is Church?

A reflection on our two-fold calling

In every age, the Church must ask not only *who we are* but *why we gather*. I believe the answer lies in a sacred rhythm, that the Church has two responsibilities. One is to be a worshiping community—a place of prayer, formation, and shared spiritual life. The other is to be a serving community—an embodiment of Christ's command to love our neighbor with radical compassion.

Parish Life: The sacred gathering



The 8:00 am worshipers after we blessed new holy water on Sunday, October 5

This is the Church as sanctuary. We gather to sing, to pray, to listen, and to be shaped by the Word. Parish Life is where we are nourished—where we learn to see the world through the lens of grace. Our pledges sustain this life: they support liturgy, music, pastoral care, and outreach giving that flows from our shared abundance.

But Parish Life is not the whole story. It is the soil, not the fruit.

Outreach Ministry: Love in action



Lori Thurgood, giving away diapers on our behalf

The second responsibility of the Church is to *scatter in love*. This is the Church as movement—stepping beyond the sanctuary to meet the world's needs. The Abundance Ministry

is not an add-on; it is the living pulse of discipleship. It is where we practice what we preach, where we embody the Gospel in tangible ways.

Here, we do not simply give—we accompany. We do not merely serve—we listen, we learn, we stand in solidarity. This ministry is not about charity; it is about kinship.

Howard Thurman, the theologian and civil rights leader, once wrote: *"The movement of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men often calls them to act against the spirit of their times or causes them to anticipate a spirit which is yet in the making."*

This is the work of the Church in the world: to anticipate the spirit that is yet in the making, and to live it now.

Holding chalice and towel

The Church is most fully itself when it holds both chalice and towel—when it celebrates Eucharist and washes feet. Worship without service becomes insular. Service without worship loses its soul. But together, they form a rhythm of grace: gathering and sending, receiving and giving, praying and acting.

In this rhythm, we become a Church fully alive.

~ David Ewing



David Ewing

"The Church is most fully itself when it holds both chalice and towel—when it celebrates Eucharist and washes feet."

Changing my vocabulary



Kat Turner

I am very proud of Resurrection's continuing outreach programs and its new Abundance Ministry. As you will recall, our Abundance Ministry is a big and impactful expansion of our outreach activities that helps us fulfill the mission of our church: "God's work – our hands, voices, and hearts committed to our community and the world."

I have been surprised recently by hearing our Abundance Ministry described as "giving away money," and I confess, I have been guilty of this same vocabulary shorthand. It is especially appropriate to think about whether this vocabulary shorthand is accurate as we begin our stewardship campaign and develop a budget for 2026. Why, we might ask, do we need to give money to Resurrection, if it is giving away a lot of money?

I have always thought about Resurrection's finances in two parts. (Sorry, Ken Gay and Rev'd Jo; I know it's much more complex than this!) The money we need to sustain ourselves as a worshipping community (clergy, building expenses, outreach, and other budget elements) comes from our members through pledges and special gifts. This is the money we give "back to God" in thanksgiving for all that God has given us. The second pot of money has come from unexpected gifts, wise investments that have

doubled over time, and occasionally been augmented by small operational budget surpluses. The bulk of this money has come from generous bequests of two people who were not members of our church. Such people typically don't want their gift to pay the electric bill but to help Resurrection do the work that God has given us to do.

So, the problem with my vocabulary of saying, "We give away money," is that it focuses on the wrong aspect of our Abundance Ministry: the money, and not the God-work we are doing in Christ's name, both inside our church building and in the community and the world. For example:

- We didn't just give away money to Culmore Clinic, We supported a clinic that provides 7,000 patient visits a year, including hard-to-find dental and vision services in a neighborhood where 67% of the residents do not have health insurance.
- With the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria, we are part of a community organization that provided \$1.6 million to more than 400 Alexandria students in the last year alone. Think about those young people and how their lives will be changed by the love and support of their community.
- At The Spire, 11 households that are rent burdened (need more than 30% of monthly income for housing) are participating in a rent-subsidy program that will both ease their monthly financial demands and provide financial counseling and savings programs that will match their contributions, all designed to prepare them for a better economic future. In the 4 years since we moved back to our church and became neighbors to the tenants at The Spire, we have been looking for ways to be in relationship with these neighbors, and this program may well change the lives forever of the participating tenants.
- Many food pantries and feeding programs measure their success by reporting the number of pounds of food they have given away. Not Resurrection! We measure our impact by the number of people we have fed—more than 80,000 since inception. That's like feeding everyone in my hometown for four years! And by supporting the food pantry at Grace Church, we were able to extend the reach of our feeding program to help a neighborhood that has a different demographic than that near Resurrection.

(Continued on page 5)

Welcome, Virginia Sircy

Those of you who attended our September 21 service were treated to music performed by Virginia Sircy, a gifted church musician under whom I sang for many years at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Great Falls. Our music program thrived under her for many years until her retirement.



Virginia Sircy

Virginia has had a distinguished music career. She obtained her Doctorate in Music at the University of North Texas and was on the music faculty at Cameron University in Oklahoma. For many years she was active with the piano faculty of the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute before retiring and moving to Virginia where she joined us at St. Francis. She has performed on the organ and piano in a number of local churches as well as accompanying vocal and chamber music groups up and down the East Coast and in Europe.

Virginia's husband, Otice, was a career English professor and was an accomplished cellist who spent his retirement years in music endeavors. Otice died in December of 2024 and Virginia continues to live at The Jefferson in Arlington.

Rev. Jo has asked Virginia to play for us as long as this works out for her. Please welcome her and enjoy not just her music but also her quick wit and charming nature. We are in for a real treat.

~ Roland Blocksom



Roland Blocksom

Changing my vocabulary

(Continued from page 4)

- The West End Lazarus Ministry helps 16 different households *every week* with emergency financial assistance, preventing evictions and utility shutoffs, and meeting medical needs.

One of the things that I love about Resurrection is that our response to our worship is a desire to help people. Even without the Abundance Ministry, our annual budget includes outreach activities, and again the emphasis is on helping people:

- Our hygiene bags are not just kits with soap, toothpaste and the like. They are the means by

which 236 individuals have been able to present themselves with dignity and respect as they work, go to school, and participate in society.

- Diapers? Don't think of what we have done as distributing 400 bags of diapers this year. Think of it as 6,000 times the babies in those 400 families have had a warm, dry, comfortable bottom.
- Our outreach giving at Resurrection has contributed to women in the South Sudan, to VOICE's efforts at housing and equity in northern Virginia, and to hurricane relief in the Texas hill country.

What we do at Resurrection is not about giving away money, although we thank God for providing us with money to worship, form our members as Christ-followers, and do His work beyond our walls. It is about helping people in response to our worship and faith formation. So, the next time I am asked what we do at Resurrection. I am changing my vocabulary. I'm not going to say, "We give away money." I'm going to say, "We help people as a way of sharing Christ's love."

~ Kat Turner

NOTE: One could say, the way that "We give away money" gets transformed into "We help people" is through love.

How long does it take to install an organ?

This is something of a trick question here at Church of the Resurrection. Our pipe organ was removed from our old building seven years ago this month, stored in Fredericksburg while our current building was being constructed, and was supposed to have been functional again by Easter Sunday 2021.

Our organ builder, Michael Hart of The Di Gennaro-Hart Organ Company, has encountered many obstacles in completing this task. Among those obstacles was the COVID pandemic, which forced many of the vendors needed to accomplish portions of this work out of business.

The good news is that on October 3 Michael Hart sent us this list of the work that has been completed:

- “The new Solid State Organ Systems control system has been installed in both the console and chamber end.
- The console is fully installed and functioning properly. One of the stop tablets was misengraved, and the California firm that made the tilting tablet assembly closed during COVID. We are [considering fixes].
- The windchest and actions for the Trompette 1-73, and Celeste 13-61, are installed and playing.
- The windchests and pipes for the Principal 1-12 and

the Bourdon 1-12 are installed and playing.

- The windchest and pipes (all 183 of them) for the Mixture are installed and playing.
- The facade pipes are installed.
- The swell shades and their actions are installed and working.
- The blower and the two wind reservoirs, and all windlines are installed and working, and windlines have been installed awaiting the last windchests.

The list of completed items was followed by a short list of items remaining:

- Finishing and installing the Main Windchest, housing the Principal, Flute, and String stops.
- Activating the console power switch, presently you have to turn the organ on in the blower closet.
- Tuning and regulations.
- The last big thing is the main windchest. The racking will be done [the week of October 12]. Some replacement valves are due then [which will allow] assembly and wiring, after all this the installation in the Church.”

~ The Rev'd Jo Belser
with info from Michael Hart



Building a windchest (an air-tight wooden box that holds pressurized air and delivers it to the pipes, which sit on top of it, to produce sound). The board with holes is a toe board. The pipes get installed on top of the toe board (see first photo below) and underneath are valves that control the flow of air to the pipes (see second photo, below).



Clergy & Staff

Rector

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

Deacon

[The Rev. Theresa Lewallen](#)

Pianist

Virginia Sircy

Bookkeeper

Holly Zarazinski

Parish

Administrator

Angie Armwood

Sexton

Beltway Cleaning, Inc.

Walking and listening with Jesus

“What connection can you make to the Gospel?”

This question came up consistently as we reflected about our pilgrimage experiences on September 22 through 26. Each day, we were challenged by what we heard, how the information was being presented, and what we felt as we had “ears to hear and eyes to see.”

Many of you have heard the Forum that Verleah Kosloske and I presented on October 5. No presentation can provide a full sense of what the Spirit continues to stir within us as our hearts open more each day.

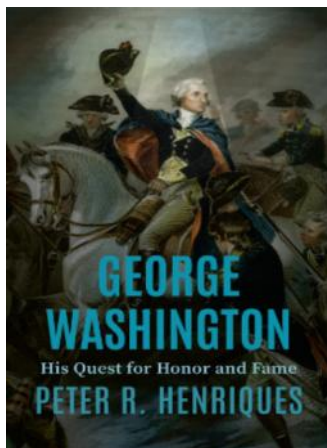
It was clear to me that the full engagement of my body, mind, and spirit was a very different experience than attending a lecture or visiting a site as a tourist without the intent to be challenged and changed spiritually. There is a place in our lives for all of these opportunities. In fact, learning and reflecting can begin the process of approaching the questions that arise when we confront the truth of our familial and religious ancestors who settled on this continent. We have tried to bury the truth of the blasphemy, sin, cruelty, and dehumanization of God’s people for so long that any pain or grief about that may allow us to turn away from it. In fact, the light of the world, Jesus, reminds us that each and every one, but most particularly those considered

outcast, different, or foreign, are at the center of his ministry and of God’s kingdom.

The Racial Justice and Healing Team met on October 7 and will schedule some opportunities for Church of the Resurrection to visit and pray at some sites in Alexandria.

In the meantime, Alexandria offers a number of events in October and early November.

Consider attending a lecture on October 14 at 7:00 pm at the Lyceum, George Washington and Slavery. [Tickets are \\$15.](#)



George Washington was the only Founder to present a plan to free his enslaved workers, but he lived with slavery and off slavery throughout his life. In this assessment of Washington and slavery, Professor Henriques attempts to examine the dilemma Washington (and the nation) faced and what his actions, or lack of actions, reveal

about the man and the country he founded. After the lecture, a book signing will be held in the Museum Shop. Proceeds benefit the Historic Alexandria Museums.

Determined, The 400 Year Struggle for Black Equality, a traveling exhibit of the State Library of Virginia, will be at the Queen Street Library through October 25.

The Racial Justice and Healing Team also recommend that you **visit the Black History Museum** which has a fabulous exhibition showing how photography and marketing were used to change the cultural understanding about African-Americans in the US.

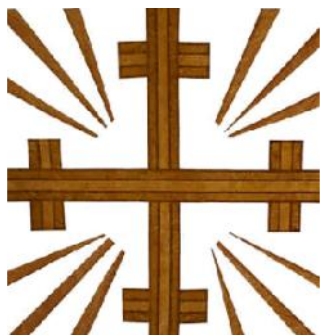
And a preview for November—**[Freedom House Reopening!](#)** Tickets for tours of the newly renovated Freedom House will be available [online](#) beginning November 6.

I encourage you to take a moment to pray before you enter one of these spaces. Ask God to stir your heart and mind in new ways. When your visit is over, reflect, write, or talk about how what you’ve seen or heard connects with a Gospel story or other biblical story. We’d love to listen to those reflections and consider with you what Jesus is telling us today.

~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. Jo Belser
- Roland Blocksom
- Coral Childs
- David Ewing
- Lea Fowlie, editor
- Lenore Funkhouser, photos
- Michael Hart
- 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.

Our book ministry “haul”



The books donated by RIF NOVA

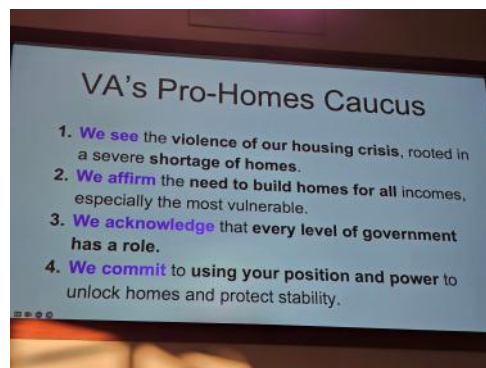
On Saturday, October 4, Beatley Central Library on Duke Street in Alexandria hosted a Hispanic Fiesta in honor of Hispanic Heritage month. There was food, music, dancing, arts and crafts, and informational booths. One of the booths was by [RIF NOVA](#), the northern Virginia chapter of Reading is Fundamental. They gave away free books to the children attending the fiesta. At the end of the fiesta, they donated a box of 50 children's books to the Little Free Library at our Church of the Resurrection. In addition, RIF NOVA routinely donates books to area schools and libraries and we connected them with the Hammond Market about providing books there.

~ Coral Childs

Bus with us for a cause

VOICE, Northern Virginia's community organizing group, has organized a huge Homes for All Assembly, a “housing pep rally” to be held at Floris United Methodist Church in Herndon on Sunday, October 19, to agitate public officials for attainable housing. As of this moment, there are 6 State Senators, 4 State Delegates, and 20 local elected officials committed to attending, and 631 registered attendees, including 13 from Resurrection. (The church has seating for 800 people.) Rev'd Jo and Alexandria Mayor Gaskins are two of the speakers.

The bus from Alexandria will leave at 2:00 pm from Fairlington Presbyterian Church, where it will return by 6:00 pm. If you can join us, please [register](#) and plan to attend.



The Homes for All Assembly also will create a “Pro-Homes Caucus”