

InSpire

We pilgrimage this month

Will you pray for us?

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When we hear the word pilgrimage, different things may come to mind. Some of us know people who have taken pilgrimages. We've heard about the City's pilgrimage to the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, as part of the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project. The testimonies of people who participated in that journey have spoken about their hearts being broken open, they were changed, and many came back with a deeper resolve to work to tell the full truth about our city's history.

Spiritual pilgrimages have been a part of our faith history for centuries. A few years ago, while I was visiting friends in Porto, Portugal, I saw scallop shells decorated with crosses in the historic cathedral. We saw shells embedded in the walls of buildings. While we were at the beach, we saw people with hiking poles and similar scallop shells attached to their backpacks. Signs welcomed the pilgrims who were walking the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage route established in the 9th century.

Although my friends and I were walking some of the same paths as the pilgrims, we were not on pilgrimage. I was on vacation, a tourist.

What makes a pilgrimage different from vacation or

Episcopal Church of the Resurrection

God's work—our hands, voices, and hearts, committed to our community and the world.



Prayers for the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia's Racial Justice and Healing Virginia Pilgrimage September 22 through 26, 2025

tourism? These definitions offered by Canon Dr. Lee Hill are immensely helpful in clarifying the difference:

Tourism: A trip to experience a specific place; the goal is the destination and what it has to offer.

Vacation: A means to relax, rest, and escape daily life in order to return rejuvenated.

Pilgrimage: A journey of the spirit and the soul, taken in pursuit of personal growth and change, with the desire to encounter the Divine. The pilgrimage begins with the pilgrim's desire.

In preparation for our pilgrimage as a community, the diocesan pilgrimage

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The Rev'd Jo Belser



We will pilgrimage with our pilgrims

Compline nightly at 7:00 to 7:15 pm, on Zoom, September 22 — 26

Many of the articles in this month's issue of *InSpire* touch in some way on the need for racial justice and healing. This is because *our* biggest event this month is the diocesan "Racial Justice and Healing Virginia Pilgrimage" on September 22—26. The pilgrims will visit various places that reveal historic and ongoing complicity in racial injustice, and then do the spiritual work of discerning what an appropriate response should be.

I call this diocesan pilgrimage "*our* biggest event" for two reasons. First, two people from our church will be on the pilgrimage. We will accompany them spiritually, through our prayers and by our desire to

be with them physically on this journey.

When you read Rev'd Theresa's article, you may notice the definition of pilgrimage she shared, "A journey of the spirit and the soul, taken in pursuit of personal growth and change, with the desire to encounter the Divine. The pilgrimage begins with the pilgrim's desire."

I know that many of you wanted to be physically present on this pilgrimage, prevented mostly due to the high mobility demands on the pilgrims. If so, by your desire, your pilgrimage has already begun.

The main way to move from desire to fulfillment is through prayer. On

September 21, we will send our physical pilgrims off with prayer at each service. We also will distribute a packet of prayers that Rev. Theresa prepared for you to use for each day of the pilgrimage. Then, each night that week, we will gather online at 7:00 pm and use the structure of the 15-minute Compline service to pray for the pilgrimage and pilgrims and what they were scheduled to have experienced that day. I hope you will join us. The link to the service on Zoom is on the homepage of the church's website (welcometoresurrection.org), accessible in e-Notes, and in QR code here on this page.

~ The Rev'd Jo Belser

Hello, Resurrection!



Torie Linner

This summer, I completed Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. As a Chaplain Intern, I provided spiritual and emotional care to patients, their families, and hospital staff. My schedule consisted of 12-hour day or night shifts. During the day, I shadowed staff chaplains and ministered to patients in the General Medicine unit. At night, I was the only chaplain in the hospital and responded to pages from all units as they came in.

My CPE experience deepened and broadened my understanding of spiritual

care. I also strengthened my active listening skills, exercised intercultural humility, deepened my self-awareness, furthered self-care practices, and continued my spiritual walk with Christ.

Personally, this unit taught me about the importance of spiritual care and how it can come from many different people: chaplains, but also the irreplaceable spiritual care that people receive from their own communities.

From this experience, I have clarity that spiritual care is an integral part of my call to ministry. I'm looking

forward to applying what I've learned in CPE to my practices and actions in my seminary and parish. I return to Alexandria with a renewed sense of mission.

In addition to CPE, I preached at my home parish, visited NYC to see my friend perform on Broadway, and enjoyed spending summer in the beautiful city of Chicago.

Now, I've just returned from visiting family in Sweden and am so excited to spend this upcoming school year worshiping and serving God with you. See you soon!

~ Victoria (Torie) Linner

George Washington and the paradox of liberty

Wrestling with a Founding Contradiction

When I saw *e-Notes* for August 7, I was struck by two references to George Washington—one announcing a new Library of Congress exhibit on the parallel lives of King George III and Washington, and another featuring a photograph of Mount Vernon on the cover of a Racial Justice and Healing Retreat brochure. These juxtapositions—between empire and revolution, reverence and reckoning—prompted me to revisit a long-held personal interest: the moral contradictions embedded in Washington’s legacy.

Washington’s relationship with slavery is one of the most revealing windows into the founding era’s complexities. Born into Virginia’s planter class, he inherited enslaved people as a preteen and expanded his holdings through marriage and purchase. At Mount Vernon, enslaved labor was central to the plantation’s productivity. Washington posted ads for runaway slaves, including the now-famous Ona Judge, who escaped his household and resisted recapture despite his persistent efforts.

These ads, written in his own voice, are stark reminders of the human cost of slavery and the lengths to which even revered leaders went to preserve their economic interests.

Washington’s stance on slavery did shift over time.

During the Revolutionary War, he witnessed Black soldiers fighting for liberty—an irony not lost on him. His correspondence with the Marquis de Lafayette reveals a growing discomfort with slavery. Lafayette, a committed abolitionist, proposed a plan to free enslaved people and employ them as tenant farmers. Washington praised the idea but never acted on it, bound by the norms and entanglements of his world.

One of the most poignant episodes in Washington’s life is his correspondence with Phillis Wheatley, the Black poet who had been enslaved in Boston. In 1775, she sent Washington a poem praising him as a “great chief, with virtue on thy side.” He responded with a letter thanking her for her “elegant Lines” and addressing her as “Mrs. Phillis”—a rare gesture of respect. Edward J. Larson notes that no other letter exists from Washington to a Black person, nor any addressing a woman outside his family by her first name.

Washington later met Wheatley in Cambridge, a quiet moment of recognition that stands in contrast to his pursuit of Ona Judge, whose defiance and escape remain one of the most documented acts of resistance against a Founding Father.

Washington’s moral evolution culminated in his 1799 will, which freed the 123 enslaved people he

owned outright—after Martha’s death. He was the only Founding Father to take such a step. He stipulated that elderly or infirm individuals be cared for, and that children be educated and trained in trades. Martha freed them a year later, possibly fearing for her safety.

Yet nearly half of the enslaved people at Mount Vernon—those tied to the Custis estate—remained in bondage. Washington could not legally free them, and their fate was left to Martha’s heirs.

The image of Mount Vernon on the pilgrimage brochure is more than symbolic. It reminds us that historical sites are not just places of pride—they are places of reckoning. Washington’s legacy forces us to wrestle with how moral evolution can coexist with complicity—and how historical figures can be both agents of change and products of their time.

His story mirrors the broader American contradiction: a nation founded on liberty that simultaneously upheld slavery. To engage with Washington honestly is to engage with ourselves—to ask how we, too, navigate the tension between principle and practice, between aspiration and action.

This essay emerges from a season of personal transition



David Ewing

“The image of Mount Vernon ... is more than symbolic. It reminds us that historical sites are not just places of pride—they are places of reckoning.”

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Considering your final arrangements

We “inch” our way toward thinking about our earthly transition...



Lea Fowlie

After our recent Forum on making our final arrangements, it made me think of some of my experiences with the notion of death.

- While in college in Norfolk, I had to take my car in for service work. It was going to be a long wait, so another college-age customer and I decided to go for a walk. We saw a sign that said ‘vault shop’ so we went in thinking it was about business vaults or personal vaults. It was personal alright. It was the concrete vaults that your full-size casket went into. He and I decided to stay and talk to the shop owner about them anyway. I never saw my companion again.
- I went to a party at a college friend’s house. His coffee table was a white, child’s coffin under glass. Shocked the heck out of me. If you looked inside, they had a teddy bear or something similar. They went all out with it at Halloween. Didn’t go back to his house after that.
- My mother decided it was time for her to make her final arrangements. You need to understand something about my mom. She had a set of copper-bottom Revere Ware—pots, frying pans, etc. She was very proud of those pots and pans. She was a stickler about polishing them to a brilliant shine after each use. It drove me nuts because I was often the one that did the polishing. Thank heavens for Twinkle Copper Polish!

When the day arrived that we were going to go casket shopping, we were both a bit nervous. Neither of us wanted to think about why we were doing this.

When we got to the store, we were led into a room that was wall-to-wall with caskets. There were wooden ones and metal ones. There were ‘economy’ models and ‘over the top’ models. There were those on sale and those at full price.

The salesman helping us was very thorough. He told us that you could get the interior liners and padding made with cotton, crepe, satin, polyester silk, and wrinkle-free, anti-static, polyester velvet. Some were so beautiful and comfortable looking that you wanted to try them out right then and there. But leave the lid open for me, please...I’m claustrophobic!

The wooden caskets ran the gamut from simple pine boxes to those made of veneer or solid mahogany, cedar, oak, cherry, poplar, and walnut.

The metal caskets were made of steel and finished in bronze, copper, pewter, and silver or in colors such as yellow, purple, red, cobalt

blue, and green. You could get glossy, brushed, or patterned final finishes on them.

That was a lot of info to take in. After a while, we split up. Mom was at one end of the room looking at things, and I was at the other. I discovered the copper-colored casket. I shouted across the room that I could see her getting out of the coffin to polish off any spots. We had a good laugh. The salesman left the room.

- I was an instructor at the US House of Representatives. One of our professional development courses required us to develop a program on how adults learn. We had to incorporate the five senses (hear, see, touch, smell, taste) into it. It must have been shortly after the experience with my mother because my program used caskets. I found a bunch of wooden boxes with hinged lids that I had around the house to use as the caskets.

I outfitted the boxes using myself as the example.

Hear: I put a cassette recorder inside with some of my favorite music (CSNY) so I could sing along. *See:* I used a jewelry box with a mirror underneath the lid (Can you imagine watching yourself decompose!?!). *Touch:* I put a teddy bear inside for comfort. *Smell:* I put a sachet of my favorite

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Considering your final arrangements

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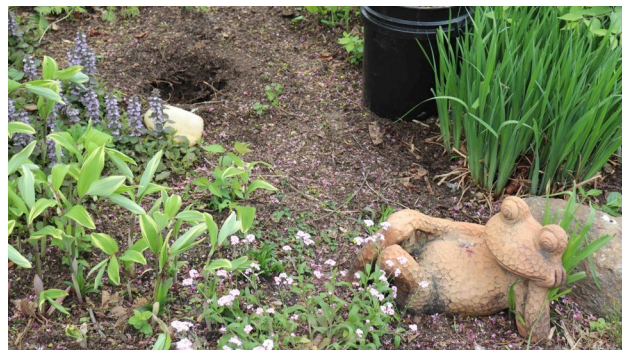
scent inside. *Taste:* I put something chocolate inside, probably chocolate chip cookies. I was the last one to deliver my presentation, but we had to quit just before I could give it. I ended up giving the presentation to just my boss on a Friday. She gave me some funny looks but listened. She came back the next week and told me that my presentation helped her get the courage to talk with her mom over the weekend about final preparations. An A⁺ in my book.

- By the time my mother died, she had decided that she wanted to be cremated. She donated her body to science, and I was told that it could be one to two years before I received her cremains. She died in October. I went to Chicago to visit family for Christmas and when I returned there was a pink attempted delivery slip in my mailbox. It was mom's ashes. I opened the outer box and found a brown plastic one inside. I thought about opening that box too but decided I didn't want her ashes all over the place. I put the box on the dining room table. I used that table as a sorting table when cleaning out files, etc. Periodically, I would lay papers on top of mom's ashes, catch myself with "sorry mom" and put the papers someplace else. Her ashes sat there until
- July when they were interred in an urn with a wheat motif that I took to mean 'life.'
- I went with a friend to Arlington Cemetery to visit the graves of my aunt Anna and uncle Val. It was a cold day with left over snow on the ground. We looked for at least half an hour and couldn't find them. I finally looked up and said, 'Anna and Val, if you want us to find you give us a sign.' They didn't so we left. The next time I went I found their graves as soon as I got out of the car. I guess they didn't want to talk with anyone but me the first time.
- I was talking to a cousin one time about allergies. I am allergic to formaldehyde. When I told him that precluded me from getting embalmed, he said but you'd be dead. He didn't get the joke.
- Before a major surgery, I decided that I needed to get my medical and financial powers of attorney in order and update my will. I asked my oldest friend, who brought her husband, and a cousin to serve as executors and powers of attorney. We met at Cracker Barrel outside of Fredericksburg. After lunch we began the discussion: How much effort did I want the EMTs and doctors to

make to save me? Did I want to be on a ventilator? Who was getting my furniture? Who was getting everything else? Etc. Etc. Suddenly, I realized that the three of them were discussing everything without me, especially about parsing out my belongings. I was invisible. I remember saying, 'Hey, I'm sitting right here!' My friend's husband cracked some jokes lightening the mood and we all laughed.

Final thought. It helps to have a sense of humor, dark or quirky though it may be, when you're considering your final arrangements.

~ Lea Fowlie



Garden "frog" near a site in our Memorial Garden awaiting "sprinkling" of cremains

NOTE: Our recent Forum was led by Elta Wilson and Rev'd Jo about "returning our bodies to God." A future Forum, not yet scheduled, will be about funeral planning. Start picking your favorite hymns now for your "homegoing celebration."

Syncopated silence: On mysticism and justice



David Ewing

In an age of relentless urgency, mysticism may seem indulgent—a quiet retreat from the clamor of justice. But for Howard Thurman, and for those who walk in his contemplative footsteps, mysticism was not retreat. It was resistance. It was encounter. It was the sacred rhythm beneath the surface of justice.



Howard Thurman as Dean of Rankin Chapel, Howard University, 1932–1944, ©Addison N. Scurlock, from [Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives](#) [NMAH.AC.0618.S04.01](#), via Wikipedia, fair use

Howard Thurman (1899–1981) was a theologian, mystic, educator, and civil rights leader whose quiet wisdom shaped some of the most transformative movements of the 20th century. Born in Daytona Beach, Florida, and raised by his grandmother—a formerly enslaved woman—Thurman developed a deep reverence for the spiritual resilience of the oppressed. His theology fused contemplative mysticism

with radical nonviolence, influencing figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. and inspiring generations to see justice not merely as a political demand but as a sacred calling. As co-founder of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples—the first interracial, interfaith congregation in the United States—and as Dean of Chapel at both Howard and Boston Universities, Thurman embodied a vision of beloved community rooted in silence, compassion, and the sound of the genuine.

Thurman's life was a testament to this rhythm—a quiet force moving beneath the surface of history. His mysticism was rooted in attentiveness. He listened for what he called “the sound of the genuine”—a voice that speaks from the depths of the soul and from the margins of society. This kind of listening is not passive; it is active, syncopated, alive. It requires silence, yes, but a silence that pulses with purpose.

Justice, in Thurman's vision, is the outward movement of that inward clarity. It is the embodiment of compassion, the refusal to let suffering go unnoticed. The mystic does not turn away from the world's pain; they turn toward it with eyes wide open and heart attuned. In this way, mysticism and justice are not opposites—they are partners in transformation.

This rhythm echoes in the Celtic imagination as well. As someone shaped by Scottish heritage, I recognize the mystic's path in the reverence for nature, in the concept of thin places where heaven and earth meet. The Scottish soul knows that silence can be syncopated—that stillness can carry the beat of resistance and grace, like a bodhrán drum echoing through mist-laced glens.

To be a mystic in the tradition of Thurman is to believe that transformation begins in the soul but must reach the streets. It is to carry silence into systems, prayer into policy, and grace into the grit of daily life. It is to listen deeply and act boldly.

In my own journey—through historical memory, theological reflection, and the quiet companionship of figures like Pauli Murray—I've come to see that mysticism is not a detour from justice. It is its foundation. And in the syncopated silence, we do not escape the world—we reenter it, bearing the rhythm of hope.

~ David Ewing

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Was it really just luck?

Those of you who attended my forum on Mission Real Estate Development heard me say this about Resurrection's redevelopment project: "We were lucky." And we were, as we experienced:

- An engaged congregation who discerned with open minds and hearts and chose to listen to their empathetic hearts rather than their rational minds;
- A cadre of parishioners, some recently retired, with the time and energy to shepherd the project and a willingness to work together and split tasks so no one lost heart;
- The staff of Alexandria's Housing and Planning and Zoning Departments, who freely gave their advice and support, financial commitments, and variances;
- A redevelopment partner with decades of experience who seemed to "get" us and our vision and took the unexpected costs to help us stay within our budget;
- Three Diocesan Standing Committees who were justifiably concerned about a congregation's ability to pull off such a project, but who listened, discerned, and eventually approved;
- A Bishop who also had concerns about the potential success of our plan, but whose own discernment convinced him that God had really called us to this ministry;
- A City Council who balanced the concerns of neighbors with the urgent need for affordable housing in Alexandria's West End and raised taxes to vote "yes."
- COVID policies that allowed construction projects to continue and a schedule that put our project ahead of eventual supply chain issues.

It's NEVER luck it's ALWAYS God

What luck, right? So many obstacles and we came out on the lucky side of each of them. It was like winning the lottery 8 times.

What I call luck, Rev. Jo had always grounded in a more theological foundation, and in recent conversations with her I have come to her way of thinking. Was it really just luck that every potential obstacle broke our way, or was it God at work? As she often reminds us, "God gives us everything we need to do what He is calling us to do."

As a Trustee of the Virginia Episcopal Real Estate Partners (formerly Virginia Diocesan Homes) I have been working with some other congregations that are considering affordable housing and the first thing I tell them is the importance

of congregational discernment. I used to think this just meant achieving consensus on a plan, but I now see that there is a much more theological or spiritual component to discernment. It is reviewing the possibilities, listening to your heart, praying for wisdom, and recognizing where God is guiding you. You know, like those WWJD bracelets.

You may have heard people who don't go to church say, "I am spiritual, not religious." I've always said the opposite, "I am religious, not spiritual." I thought that if God had something to say to me, He'd give me a sign. A dramatic sign. Like Moses' burning bush or being struck blind on the way to Damascus.

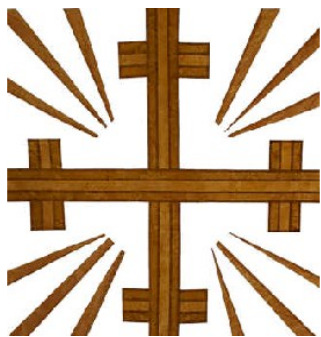
Over the years I've finally come to realize that signs from God can be much more subtle. The sign may be in the willingness of a congregation to grapple seriously with the question of what God is calling it to do. I love that Resurrection continually asks this question and answers it by saying "help people." Our Abundance Ministry is our most recent example of this.

So now when I describe Resurrection's affordable housing journey and say "We were lucky," I understand why and how we were lucky. It was God's grace. He tilted the process in our favor because we were doing what He wanted us to do.

~ Kat Turner



Kat Turner



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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
- Lea Fowlie, editor
- Lenore Funkhouser, photos
- The Rev'd Theresa Lewallen
- 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.

George Washington and the paradox of liberty

(Continued from page 3)

and reflection. Having recently moved to a new community and begun exploring themes of transformation and grace more intentionally, I find myself drawn to the moral complexities of figures like George Washington—not to excuse them, but to understand how change unfolds within constraint.

Washington's story reminds me that transformation is rarely linear. It is often halting, partial, and shaped by the pressures of one's time. Yet even within those limits, there are moments of moral clarity—letters written, decisions made, silences broken—that point toward a deeper reckoning.

As I continue my own work—whether in the Memorial Garden, in archives, or in conversation—I carry these questions with me: What does it mean to live with integrity in a world of contradiction? How do we honor truth without losing hope? And how might we, like Washington in his final act, choose grace over silence?

~ David Ewing

NOTE: Google says that "Founding Contradiction" is a phrase most famously used by NPR's Hidden Brain podcast to describe the inherent conflict between the American ideals of freedom and equality, as expressed by men like Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, and the reality of slavery and racial injustice that also existed at the nation's founding and continue to this day. The contradiction lies in the nation's promise of liberty for "all men" while simultaneously allowing and perpetuating the enslavement of Black people, a fundamental hypocrisy that remains a core part of the American experience.

We pilgrimage this month

(Continued from page 1)

participants are meeting online. On our most recent call, we were asked to share how we are preparing spiritually for the pilgrimage and to name our deepest desire. One of my spiritual preparations has been to find or write prayers for our Resurrection community to use to support Verleah Kosloske and I on our pilgrimage. These include a sending prayer we will use at all services on September 21, individual prayers offered for your use while we are on pilgrimage September 22-26, and offered for use by those who support our pilgrimage at nightly Compline services on Zoom from 7:00 to 7:15 pm each night we are away.

We now have a more detailed "draft final" schedule which has helped me to be specific in the prayers for some of the days. I will post it on September 14 so you will have a clearer idea of where we will be. One key reminder to the pilgrims is that we need to be flexible, and I ask the same of you in this process.

All pilgrims on this journey to important racial healing sites in Virginia have completed Sacred Ground or another antiracism training endorsed by the Episcopal Church. We will also be deepening our connections with each other through our pre-trip meetings and through our stay at Roslyn in Richmond. The schedule includes individual processing time, group discussions, and Eucharist a few times during the week.

Beyond the nightly Compline services, I ask you to pray for us all. Pray that we may be open to encountering the Divine in the people and places we spend time with as we confront our own understandings of the history of our Church, our Commonwealth, and our Nation.

~The Rev'd Theresa Lewallen