

InSpire

Confessions and lessons on the investiture of our new Presiding Bishop

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Confession 1: I love everything about Gothic Cathedrals like Notre Dame in Paris and our own National Cathedral in Washington DC. Their colorful stained-glass windows send prisms into the sanctuary when the sun is right. The rows of church fathers and saints captured in stone stare down on us gravely. Intricate and sometimes playful wood carvings on pews and the choir misericordias bring unexpected delight. But mostly, I love the majesty of the cathedrals as they reach heavenward and I think about the generations of artisans, craftsmen, and builders who devoted their lives and faith to constructing something for the glory of God, something that most of them never saw completed. So, I was disappointed to learn that the investiture of the Rt. Rev. Sean Rowe as Presiding Bishop would take place not in one of these beautiful buildings, but in the Chapel of Christ the Lord in the headquarters building of the Episcopal Church in New York.

Lesson 1: Bishop Rowe had two explanations for selecting

this site for his investiture. First, livestreaming the ceremony meant that many more people could participate by tuning in. And second, this would reduce the carbon footprint of the event by reducing the number of people traveling to attend. Not explicitly mentioned was that the cost would likely be much less.

Inclusiveness, care for the environment, and prudent use of resources all sound like appropriate goals for the occasion and the church, and so I reluctantly decided that majestic cathedrals were not necessary even for exalted occasions. I started thinking about the investiture as similar to Christian gatherings in the early church – small, intimate, and honoring the priorities of the participants in meaningful ways.

Confession 2: I loved Michael Curry as Presiding Bishop. I found his joy, exuberance, infectious smile, and the dynamism of his sermons to be personally inspiring. Next to Bishop Curry, I feared that I would find Bishop Rowe to be a little, well, white bread.



The Most Rev. Sean Rowe, our new Presiding Bishop

Lesson 2: One has to assume that Bishop Rowe had his hand in the development of the investiture liturgy and that it reflected his deep spiritual beliefs. If I had to choose one word to describe the liturgy I would say “inclusive.” Sure, Moses, Solomon, and Peter were named as persons to whom God bestowed important gifts. But so were Deborah, Martha, and Mary Magdalene.

We are probably by now used to participating in worship services that include some Spanish as well as English, particularly in the scripture readings – and not just on Pentecost Sunday. But in addition, I also heard German, French, and some

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The Rev. Jo Belser

“I hope that you bring both your joys and woes—should you have any—to church at 10:00 am on Nov. 28, Thanksgiving Day.”

Giving thanks for both joys and woes

“Give thanks in all things,” St. Paul says. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

In November, our thoughts turn to Thanksgiving, the day we set aside for “counting our blessings,” as the old gospel hymn instructs. I hope and pray that you have many blessings to count this year, starting with the joy that we are still here and we are thriving—thanks be to God!

I suspect, though, that there might also be a few woes in your life, intermingled with the blessings. A few of us, for example, have had health issues related to injury or illness. Then, too, some may be counting the recent election results as a woe.

The 18th century poet William Blake explains that a mix of joy and woe is a natural part of life:

Man was made for
joy and woe,
and when this we
rightly know,
safely through the
world we go.

Joy and woe are
woven fine,
a clothing for
the soul divine.

Catholic theologian Richard Rohr in his *Near Occasions for Grace* calls the joys in life “the right hand of God” and the woes “the left hand of God.” Rohr sees that God comes to us hidden in times of suffering and crisis, so that our experiences of woes, as well as our experiences of joy, can draw us closer to God.

It is easy to give thanks for the joys in life. However, it’s a lot more difficult to give thanks for the woes. Instead, I confess, I often start out asking the “why” question: “Why is this woe happening to me?” This is perilously close to blaming God. A healthier spiritual practice is to instead ask God “how to use this woe for good” or “What is the gift this woe has to give me?”

I have known many people who have learned essential new things in a life crisis. Some have even learned that suffering a potentially terminal disease led them to appreciate life more when they were healed. Some learned that they could do things they had thought impossible before. Unfortunately, I have also know a few whose woes turned them to bitterness and blame. In these cases, the people involved forgot an essential truth, that God has “got us” sheltered and protected always, in both joys and woes.

In any case, I hope that you bring both your joys and woes—should you have any—to church at 10:00 am on November 28, Thanksgiving Day. We won’t be singing “Count your many blessings,” but instead our most beloved and familiar Episcopal thanksgiving hymns.

~ Rev. Jo

Advent Forum series planned

We will spend our Forum time during Advent “Journeying the Way of Love,” which is to say, living the practices for a Jesus-centered life. This is an Episcopal Church curriculum that encourages us to travel together toward Christ’s birth in these ways:

- December 1 | The Annunciation: Saying YES to the Journey
- December 8 | Mary and Elizabeth: Journeying with Family and Friends
- December 15 | The Birth of John the Baptist: Journeying with Community
- December 22 | The Birth of Jesus: Journeying with the World

Thank you

“If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.” (Meister Eckhart)

It is November, and in the United States we will celebrate Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of the month. No offense to any native Virginians reading this, but I learned in school that this holiday dated back to Massachusetts Pilgrims in 1621. Current research says the Spanish celebrated Thanksgiving in what is now Florida in 1565.

Whatever its origins, the focus of this day is gratitude. But shouldn't gratitude be part of our lives every day? Practicing gratitude by regularly focusing on the positive things in your life can be good for your health. According to the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, giving thanks 15 minutes a day, 5 days a week, for 6 weeks

can improve your mental health. Giving thanks can reduce depression, lessen anxiety, relieve stress, and improve your sleep. Improving these can in turn improve your physical health.

I know. Sometimes we get so busy with our lives we don't see all the goodness we have received. Sometimes we don't see it through all the non-goodness that may be around us. Sometimes we prefer to see ourselves as givers rather than receivers. Don't make it harder than it has to be. Make saying “thank you” a part of your daily prayer and keep it simple.

Still don't know where to start? What about those things we sometimes take for granted? Do you have enough to eat? A roof over your head? Healthcare? Education? People who love

you? “Dear God... Thank You... Amen”. It is a simple prayer, but it will be heard.

Say “thank you” on Thanksgiving Day and every day.

Factionalism increased in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The nation was recovering from a Civil War and was receiving many immigrants. In response, public schools began to incorporate holiday activities that included history and civics.

These activities were meant to Americanize newcomers and provide everyone with a shared (white, Protestant, northern) cultural heritage. Holiday observances in classrooms introduced children to American History and, in theory, prepared them to become loyal citizens.

~ Coral Childs



Coral Childs

*“Say “thank
you” on
Thanksgiving
Day and
every day.”*

We attended the 230th Diocesan Convention



Left to right: Kat Turner (our Alexandria Region Executive Board member), Rev. Theresa (our deacon), and Cynthia Bullard-Perez (our delegate this year). With Rev. Jo and Lenore Funkhouser, they spent November 7 through 9 at the 230th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia in Fredericksburg.

Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples.

This is our Diocese's Covenant statement



*The Rev.
Theresa Lewallen*

During the October Deacons' Retreat which included time with Bishop Stevenson, the Community of Deacons spent time praying together and both learning about and practicing different methods of spiritual connection with God. Between each of the practice prayer sessions, we held discussions about the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia's new mission statement: "Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples."

I had seen it, but hadn't explored what it means to me or what others think it means. Our time at Shrine Mont was the perfect beginning to consider each of the phrases. They are brief and packed with meaning and direction.

Love Jesus. We sing about this, we hear and read Scripture about this, but what do these words mean within our lives and our spiritual practices? We know our now former presiding bishop, Bishop Michael Curry, often says, "If it's not about love, it's not about God." He follows that with an explanation of the type of love he is talking about. Loving Jesus sometimes challenges us. Love that is an action verb and requires us to act for the good of all of God's people.

Love that exemplifies not only II Corinthians 13, but also the Beatitudes, the feeding of the 5,000, and Jesus' sacrificial way of being in the world. Jesus acted out of love to the very end of his physical life and then again, through the resurrection. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus cooked breakfast for the apostles on the beach. He told Peter what to do if he loves Jesus. When you see this phrase, *Love Jesus.*, what does it mean to you?



Embody Justice. These words, taken together fit with the first phrase. If we love Jesus, like Jesus, we will follow Jesus. From the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, he makes clear by reading Isaiah from the scroll in the temple, that his ministry will set the captive free. He came to restore people to God and community. God's justice is restorative for the individual and for the community. To embody justice is to be a

visible example of bringing restoration to individuals and communities through our words and actions. When we fall short of this, God offers us forgiveness and justice that heals rather than punishes. We see this in the interactions Jesus has with all people. *What would our world look like if we focus on restoration rather than on retribution?*

Be Disciples. During this liturgical season, we've heard the responses Jesus gives his followers when they ask or don't demonstrate what it means to be disciples. Jesus tells us to do as he does, to treat others as he does. In our Baptismal Covenant, we promise to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. We also promise to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. *As we discern our future together, how will we support each other to be disciples and how will we proclaim the Good News in Christ in the community and Diocese?*

I invite you to consider for yourselves how you and we can live out the mission before us.

~ Rev. Theresa

Memorial Garden gets a retaining wall

There are big changes happening on our Memorial Garden hill. Our landscape company arrived Monday morning and has already built the 18-foot retaining wall that borders the “Frontier,” the mini-wilderness on the Beaugard side of the garden. The wall is about two feet tall and a foot wide; it frames the west side of our garden and provides a new bed for planting shade-loving plants native to Virginia (mostly!). This area can also be viewed from Beaugard, showing a beautiful stone wall.

Today the crew started building the extension of the stairway in the garden that is on the left side of the central patio. They managed to find stone that look just like the quarter-century old ones, except the new ones need to age to match. These steps, along with the beautiful iron handrail, will make it safe and much easier to view the top left area of the garden.

About the flowers: We have a massive growth of what turned out to be a stunning purple perennial salvia blooming wildly still in November. It’s worth a minute to study the many large bees working there anytime it is sunny. We also have Sulfur cosmos still blooming in their rich orange. Expect to see more of these as the years go on, as they seem to love our garden and will spread. There are still several Cardinal flowers, another

Virginia native that is slowly spreading through the garden. Then too, the Sulfur Cosmos have been blooming since June. Best of all are the Cornus shrubs just above the right-hand wall. Watch as they drop their leaves and reveal their red stems that will be there to view all winter! Fabulous, care-free plants.

Back to the stonework. The Memorial Garden crew thanks all who have supported the concept of a community garden that now contains well over 100 sets of ashes. Goodwin Living owns a large portion of the land that we work, and we are thrilled that several residents of Goodwin House Alexandria work with us. Also exciting is that their Assistant Executive Director for Facilities, Theresa Thomas, has facilitated Goodwin Living’s contributing funds towards past projects, and has offered to create an entry sign. This sign will designate the garden as a joint venture, but more importantly as a Holy space.

Finally, please know any of you are welcome to join in the exhilarating work of God’s garden. We might teach you, and we might learn from you. Please come!

~ Carolyn McDonald



Carolyn in front of the new retaining wall



A fall view of our beautiful garden



Roland Blocksom on a garden path

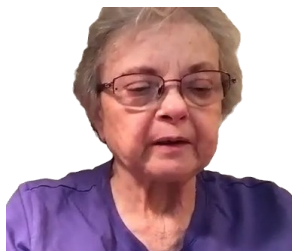
Another shelter dinner

Our dinner at Carpenter's Shelter on All Saints Sunday went well. There were 19 adults and 43 children in the shelter, of whom 11 adults and 17 children ate dinner there. The menu included minestrone soup, mac and cheese, chicken cutlets, salad, corn bread, and green beans, with fruit popsicles and apples for desert.



Maurine Bryant, David Maxwell, Margaret Riccardelli, and LaShaun Wye

Reflections on our discernment process



Kat Turner

I suspect a lot of you have had the same reaction as I did to our recent series of discernment Forums. As the Vestry liaison for "special projects," I had the privilege of attending all of the sessions and hearing what parishioners had to say. And yet... I'm not sure where I think Resurrection is going in the future. I learned a lot, and I'm sharing some thoughts with you with the hope that we will continue to work together to see what God has planned for us.

Resurrection has a big heart for helping others. This cannot be a surprise to anyone who attends Resurrection regularly. It was one of the reasons I came to Resurrection in 1984 and why I have stayed. There was a time when I thought about leaving Resurrection, as our financial situation seemed to have sapped our energy and financial support for outreach. But we engaged in a year-long discernment project that re-affirmed our

desire to help our neighbors and, against long odds, tackled and succeeded with a monumental affordable housing project. And as we moved back to our new church on our home grounds, we found new energy for a much-expanded food pantry, new diaper and hygiene bag ministries, a rebirth of our Memorial Garden, a free little library, and now an ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) program.

Resurrection takes scripture seriously. While our redevelopment project was underway, we husbanded our resources to allay the diocesan leadership fears that we would not be able to complete our project without turning to the diocese for help. Last year some of us were surprised to learn that those resources had grown to about a million dollars.

While no one explicitly said, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is

rich to enter the kingdom of God," the question became, "why does Resurrection have so much money when the need in our community is so great?" There are many verses about loving one's neighbors, and helping others, including my personal favorite, "truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me."

We started our discernment efforts on Palm Sunday thinking about who the least of these are and how we could help them. The need in our community and the world is great. Parishioners suggested dozens of organizations that could benefit from Resurrection's desire to help our community – and we had an expansive view of our community. Suggested recipients of donations from Resurrection included many in northern Virginia, but also included other national and international organizations, all of them

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Reflections on our discernment process

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deserving.

Resurrection does not want just to play the role of Lady Bountiful. Lady Bountiful is a character in a 1707 play by George Farquhar, *The Beaux' Stratagem*. According to Webster's dictionary the term has come to mean "a woman notable for or conspicuous in her benevolences."

Time and time again parishioners stated their desire to have a relationship, a connection with the organizations and individuals whom our benevolence might help. But we also acknowledged that our members are aging, and, in many cases, already committed to organizations and causes that are dear to them.

There is a difference between actions that are transactional and those that are transformative. I recently heard Bishop Stevenson suggest the importance of the diocese engaging in actions that were not merely transactional, but transformative, and this has had me thinking about this in the context of my own personal giving as well as what Resurrection might do in the future.

Let me give you an example. When I write a check to an organization I support, I try to be mindful about the purpose of the organization and those who will be helped. I think about this again when I get a thank-you letter. But no matter how much thought I

give to this relationship, this is basically transactional. I give; they do.

Building The Spire, I contend, was transformative, not just for the community that would have affordable housing for a guaranteed period of 65 years, and not just for the residents who would benefit from that housing. Building The Spire was transformative for us. When parishioners were asked to reflect on the project, they didn't talk about their pride in the building, they talked about how the project changed and grew them spiritually and how we grew together. We came back to our new church with a sense of accomplishment, and a new energy as a congregation.

I think the food pantry has also been transformative for Resurrection. It has grown almost fivefold since its early days, and we remain committed to its continuation. It has sparked related ministries like the diapers at Hammond and hygiene bags. It has deepened our collaboration with other participating faith communities. Everyone feels a sense of ownership for this vital community ministry. This is outreach that is meaningful for us as well as our guests, who we meet face to face.

What's ahead is still uncertain. Our discernment process has identified several possible future projects for Resurrection.



We don't know which, if any, will go beyond the current information gathering and testing phase. Some ideas might not find enough congregational energy to gather information, and so will fall by the wayside. Some might find the energy and gather information but hit a snag later before finding enough "roots" to continue to grow. Some, we trust and pray, will continue to convince us that they are something God is calling us to do. During all this discerning, I am sure of one thing: Resurrection will not give up. We will continue to talk to each other, to listen to our own inner voice, and strive to hear what God is telling us what we are being called to do next as we await being transformed anew by His love and direction.

~ Kat Turner

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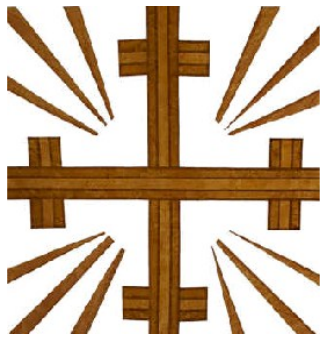
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About InSpire

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
- Coral Childs
- Lea Fowlie, editor
- Lenore Funkhouser, photos
- The Rev. Theresa Lewallen
- Carolyn McDonald
- 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.

Confessions and lessons on the investiture of our new Presiding Bishop

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other languages that my Euro-centric ear did not recognize. The bulletin identified them for me: Mandarin, Xhosa, Arabic, Hebrew, Juba, Eastern Shoshone, and Anishinaabemowin, which includes the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomi Tribes.

This investiture reminded me that we are not a white bread church, but a rich multigrain loaf with seeds and, occasionally, some nuts.

Confession 3: In some ways I found the liturgy a little strange and unfamiliar, especially when I did not understand what was being said. Despite my self-identification as liberal and open, despite Sacred Ground, and despite working hard to overcome my prejudices, it is clear that I still have a way to go. Welcoming people into my church and life really has meant expecting “the other” to become more like me.

Lesson 3: That’s not how inclusion is supposed to work. Honoring others and their traditions means not just accepting them on the margins, but striving to do



Lenore Funkhouser, Coral Childs, Angie Armwood, and Kat Turner at the Resurrection “watch party” of the Presiding Bishop’s investiture on November 2



The Most Rev. Michael Curry with the Most Rev. Sean Rowe at the end of the investiture on November 2 ~ photo by David M. Rider

what is necessary to truly become Beloved Community with all Christ’s followers.

So, thank you Bishop Rowe, for making me think more clearly about my unconscious biases and committing again to what we are asked in our Baptismal Vows: to seek and

serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself and to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

~ Kat Turner