

InSpire

How will you serve?

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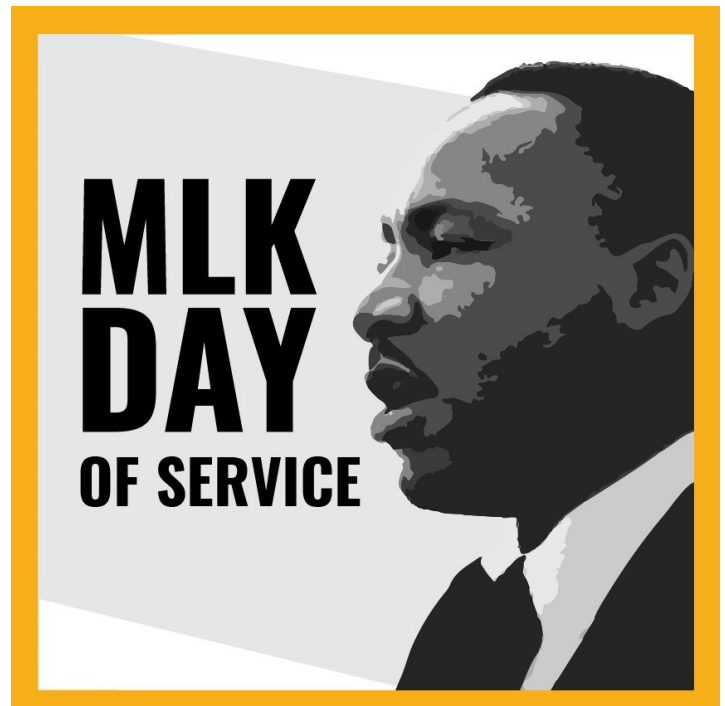
This month we celebrate Martin Luther King Day. On January 20 we remember the values for which Dr. King lived, and for which he died. It's important that we do more than just remember Dr. King's legacy. We need to deliver on his dream.

MLK Day is more than a long weekend. It's a chance to make an impact, to contribute to the community by embodying the spirit of service advocated by Dr. King. Dr. King once said, "Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve."

Service is something that Resurrection knows about. We prepare dinner for the Carpenter's Shelter, we operate the West End Food Pantry, we sponsor a Boy Scout troop for youth on the autism spectrum, we participate in the ALIVE! Walkathon, and the list goes on. But what if this year we did **more**?

Why this year? President Reagan signed the bill creating MLK Day in 1983. However, not every U.S. state chose to observe the holiday at the state level. MLK Day wasn't celebrated nationwide until 2000, making this year its 25th anniversary.

This year, pause and reflect on who you are, what you stand for, and what legacy you want to leave behind for your community. Find a place



to serve at Resurrection or somewhere else. Every small effort adds up. What you do doesn't have to be grand; even the smallest act can have a profound impact.

There's a lot going on in the world and in your personal lives. This can be overwhelming. But each of us has the power to make a positive impact in our own way. **The Racial Justice Ministry and I are issuing a MLK Day Challenge to all members of Church of the Resurrection. Choose one new act of service in honor of MLK Day.** You don't have to do it today, or next week, or even this month.

Choose one act of service to complete by December 31, 2025. If you're willing to share, we'd love to hear from you. Cards will be available in the narthex for you to describe your act of service (anonymously, if you wish) and we'll put them on the Parish Hall bulletin board. Our goal is 25 acts of service by the end of the year.

MLK Day reminds us that change starts with us, with our actions, and with our commitment to building a better world for **everyone**. Together, we can make a difference—one act of service at a time.

~ Coral Childs



Jo Belser, our Rector

“The God who loves us beyond measure is always waiting for—indeed, urging—us to undertake new ways that connect us with God and with others, improving our health and quality of life in the process.”

Make a resolution; it’s never too late

Dear past: thank you for your lessons.

Dear future: I’m ready.

Dear God, thank you for another chance. (Author unknown)

If you are one of the 3 people in 10 in America who makes a New Year’s resolution and you made one for 2025, chances are that you’ve already given up on it, or about to. A Way.com report by Ralph Robert that was shared on Stacker News on January 4 tells how long people keep their New Year’s resolutions. This is where I learned about “Quitters’ Day,” the 2nd Friday in January, by when 23% have reneged on their resolutions.

Very recent poll results show that 43% quit by the end of January, and 92% by year’s end. Surprisingly, the 8-9% who stick to their resolutions the whole year is a lot more than the 3% from a decade or more ago.

As you might imagine, the things we most often resolve to do are to improve fitness, improve finances, and to lose weight. The data (and experience!) tells us that making short-term rather than long-term goals greatly improves the likelihood that people will follow through on them: work out every day, spend less each week, and improve diet are a lot more manageable than the longer-term expression of the same goals.

What strikes me every year at this time is how we Christians are better equipped to make life-

changes than the average American. I mean, we are people who know that we can *always* begin anew; we don’t have to wait until January 1. The God who loves us beyond measure is always waiting for—indeed, urging—us to undertake new ways that connect us with God and with others, improving our health and quality of life in the process. This is the thing I like best about being a Christian: We don’t have to be stuck in life, stuck in our mistakes. It is our relationship with God that defines us, not the many ways we may have fallen short in our lives.

St. Benedict told his monks, “Even when we fail... we always begin again.” For his monks and for us, the Good News is that we do not need to begin anew alone. We have a community of fellow Christ-followers on which to rely for support along our resolution way.

At Church of the Resurrection, our Vestry always begins anew in January. We meet in person at a Vestry Conference and set our “overarching” goals for the year. This is sort of like making New Year’s Resolutions, but we always meet our goals, albeit sometimes in unexpected ways. This year our Vestry Conference is scheduled for Saturday, January 11. Whether this will be in

person or online this year depends upon the weather (and everyone’s availability to meet in person on another date).

Throughout this issue there are other “pointers” about “resolutions” you might make this year.

- Coral Childs suggests you do some “service” this year in honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (page 1).
- Eleonora Gafton (page 3) extols the benefits of doing some service by working with others, perhaps in the church.
- Rev. Susan (page 4) suggests you learn at her January 26 Forum from Bishop Budde’s new book about how to be brave.
- Rev. Theresa suggests (page 6) you put your bravery into action by working with immigrants and others.
- Margaret Riccardelli (pp. 5 and 8) tells about the joys of listening to others.
- Betsy Faga (page 5) tells of the work of Christ Church’s West End Lazarus Ministry, which is open for more helpers.
- Kat Turner (page 7) tells of things she considered in moving from her home.

~ Rev. Jo

Decorating the church for Christmas

As a proud member of the Church of the Resurrection, one of my most memorable ministries is the holiday decorating team. This role has allowed me to blend my creativity with community service, transforming our worship space into a festive and welcoming environment for the holiday season. Since our new beautiful space is filled with lots of light and brightness, our decorations were adjusted accordingly.

One of the most fulfilling aspect of this ministry has been witnessing the joy and appreciation from our congregation. Each placement of the holiday décor is carefully and strategically placed to create the desired effect by the dedication of the decorating team. It is heartwarming to see how our efforts enhance the worship experience and bring people closer together during this special time of the year.

Being on this team, I learned valuable lessons in collaboration and teamwork; each team member, whose hard work and creativity brings together the desired outcome, truly shines.

Moreover, this experience has deepened my own spiritual journey. It reminded me of the importance of serving others and using our gifts to glorify God. As 1 Peter 4:10 says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." This scripture has been a guiding light throughout our decorating process.



Our Christmas altar



*The 2025 holiday decorating team:
Eleonora Gafton, Ken Gay, Lenore Funkhouser,
Dennis Jones, and Susie Jones*



Our creche atop the organ console

For me, being on the decorating team has been a blessing. It has strengthened my connection to our church, enriched my faith, and allowed me to contribute to the joyous celebration of the holiday season. I look

forward to continuing this ministry and creating more beautiful memories with our church family.

~ Eleonora Gafton

"...this experience has deepened my own spiritual journey. It reminded me of the importance of serving others and using our gifts to glorify God."

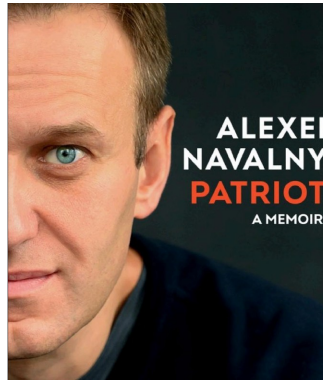
New Year resolutions

As the New Year begins, perhaps like me you have resolutions that include a cadre of promises:

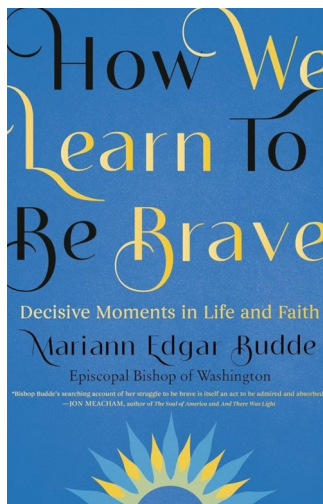
- better exercise routine,
- more dinners with friends at out of the way restaurants,
- learning Mahjong or Bridge as a gateway to meeting new people and, for me, and I hope you,
- a richer, deeper, more transparent prayer life... a prayer life that talks to God about my worries and my gratitudes and listening to what God is whispering to me.

All this being said, my New Year's resolutions *also* include reading more books that help me grow spiritually and feel not so isolated and different from those around me. To read books that acknowledge that life ebbs and flows with our mistakes, our loves, our woes. To read books that remind me about the power of God's gift of hope, forgiveness and resurrection. "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" - the psalmist says in Psalm 27:14.

And I am rather excited (!) to share two books for my January read similarly themed but in radically different contexts. [Alexei Navalny's Patriot: A Memoir](#) and Bishop Mariann Budde's [How We Learn to Be Brave, Decisive Moments in Life and Faith](#).



Both authors are uniquely transparent about failures but at the same time you are left with sensing their unrelenting perseverance. They are each, Alexei in his political aims for the sake of his beloved people, and Mariann for her life's journey that humbly brings her to an awesome and incredibly powerful position to change lives. Again, both books in contrasting places but both lives that mirror perseverance - "let your heart take courage."



And in planning with Rev. Jo, we agreed that **Bishop Budde's book would be perfect for our Forum time on January 26.**

No need to read the book. I will begin with highlights and share snippets of a live interview with Bishop Budde about her book.

Here is the teaser: her young life with and without her mother was painful and challenging. Yet this framed, I believe, her deep sense of God's grace and forgiveness. One chapter includes conversation about the late Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's CNN interview with Anderson Cooper, all the while weaving scripture and theological commentary from the likes of Henri Nouwen and Walter Brueggemann.

The New Year has begun and my hope is that along with your own resolution list, we might share together this inspiring story about courage to persevere and live by faith.

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" the psalmist says in Psalm 27:14.

~ The Rev. Susan Lukens

"No need to read the book. I will begin with highlights and share snippets of a live interview with Bishop Budde about her book."

Living in a retirement community

Let me preface the following by saying that the easiest and best move I've ever made in life was moving to Goodwin House Alexandria (GHA). I am happy and worry free, the people and staff are very friendly and helpful, and I feel safe. I consider myself supremely fortunate to live here and thank God for this good fortune.

I recall one day when my mother was about 68; while putting on lipstick she suddenly stopped and said, "When did this happen?" She was referring to her wrinkled skin. Over the next

thirty plus years she often spoke of time passing too quickly.

Sometimes I sit in the Bistro having lunch and think, "I am one of them." These gray-haired old people and honestly, it depresses me. Being around older people is a constant reminder that the end of life is near. The hourglass is running out of sand and I wonder how my life will end. Of course, I understand that is perhaps true of everyone; that life can change in an instant, but there's something about living in a senior community

that reminds me of that every day.

Along with thinking that at 80, time is running out, I also think about what I still want to do in life and feel deeply that I have another chapter in me. What that chapter is I'm not sure. Also, I wonder if I have done enough in this life, have I helped another person? Have I left any loose ends out there, unfinished business, an incomplete relationship where I could have been more considerate, empathic?

(Continued on page 8)



Margaret Riccardelli

Helping our neighbor to help our neighbors

Melanie Gray, Director of the Christ Church Lazarus Emergency Financial Ministry, has provided the following (lightly edited) information about the assistance it provided to Alexandrians in need in 2024. I have been pleased to serve as one of the volunteer counselors for this ministry, and Resurrection has generously provided financial support. You will recall that as part of our 60th anniversary celebration we contributed \$22,000 to the ministry and in January 2025 we are contributing another \$16,000.

I want to say a big and heartfelt thank you to our donors, our volunteers, and our many supporters!

Because of you our team of 13 amazing Lazarus Counselors were able to

help 422 households with their rent, utilities, medical bills, and other costs that kept them housed and stable. Of these payments, 75% (315) were for rent. The average payment needed, just \$463.54. We were open for business 36 weeks in 2024.

Total spending in 2024: \$195,611.86 (including \$33,764.92 of ALIVE! Funds).

Lazarus 2025
Based on this rate of spending, if we can be open for 48 weeks in 2025, our projected monthly spending would be \$19,466.60. To do this, we would need to raise (for direct assistance only) \$233,599.20. As always, we will work with whatever is given to us and we will do it with



Rev. Jo, the Rev. Abbott Bailey (then "Supply Vicar" of Christ Church), and Betsy Faga delivering our 60th anniversary outreach gift in August 2024

humility, gratitude, and love. I am so grateful to you all for enabling this ministry to thrive in the face of so much need and despair.

~ Betsy Faga

Experiencing and exemplifying Jesus in 2025

Through the lectionary readings for Epiphany, we experience the revelation of Jesus through interactions that people have with Jesus. As we begin the new year and look to where we are being called to see and be Jesus in the community, I offer these possibilities for your prayerful discernment.

- Learn about the Episcopal Church's role and positions regarding immigration. [Episcopal Migration Ministries](#) (EMM) welcomes refugees, educates communities, and mobilizes congregations to advocate for the protection and rights of all refugees and migrants.

In 2024, EMM resettled 5,396 refugees and 1,137 individuals with Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) from 48 countries rebuild their lives in peace and security in 13 communities across the United States.

Their work includes refugee resettlement, ministries of welcome, and support of LGBTQ+ forced migrants. EMM partners with other faith-based migration ministries. Along with these ministries, EMM works with the Episcopal Office of Government Relations to review and consider policy recommendations that align with the Resolutions passed at General Conventions. They also

help communities discern where they are called in this work.

- The Office of Government Relations [Resources page](#) offers clarification about the different types of status for immigrants and refugees. **I also invite you to join me on January 16 at the City of Alexandria's next Meaningful Conversations session about refugees and immigrants.** Join the conversation at the Black History Museum (902 Wythe Street) at 7:00 pm.
- Learn about the advocacy positions of [Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy](#) and [VOICE](#). Participate in state and local level advocacy in Richmond, with Alexandria City Council, or through direct contact with your local elected official. I have posted Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy's policy priorities on the bulletin board. You can also find them on their [Web site](#). If you have questions, talk with Rev. Jo, with me, or with members of the Racial Justice and Healing Committee.
- Participate in [Racial Justice and Healing Committee Programs](#). In the weeks to come, we will offer an opportunity to commit to a new volunteer activity. This is in keeping with the King Center's Day of Service focus for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

holiday. We invite you to attend the City of Alexandria's [Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Program](#) at the Masonic Memorial in the evening of January 15.

- Identify needs in the community that spark your interest or raise your curiosity. If you see or hear about a need that energizes you to respond, let me know. I invite you to pray about whether you are called to respond to that need or if you would like to explore it further. I'd be glad to have a conversation and learn from you.

As the Racial Justice and Healing Committee solidifies the calendar of forums, discussion groups, and activities, we pray you will join us in the months ahead as we continue our journey with Jesus.

~ The Rev.
Theresa Lewallen



Saturday, January 19, noon, at the church: potluck lunch, viewing of the movie, "My name is Pauli Murray," and discussion.

Downsizing and moving: an apartment story

When Sam and I joined Goodwin Living at Home a decade ago, our plan was to age in place in our own home. But, as they say, stuff happens, and two factors made us change our mind.

First, our health, while good, gave us some challenges. I had an arthritic knee and was hoping to avoid a second knee replacement and Sam had low vision due to macular degeneration. We both had near falls on our staircase.

But more motivating was the fact that in a 3-year period we had two major home repair projects, with expenses to fix reaching 5 figures. High 5 figures. The first was a pinhole leak in a dishwasher hose that spread and introduced mold in the kitchen cabinets and the adjacent family room. This took our kitchen out of use for 3+ weeks. The second was the result of earth movement behind the house that bowed a wall by just over a quarter of an inch, but promised to get worse and would probably cause the house to fail an inspection. This repair required six weeks, drilling holes in concrete, rerouting plumbing and electrical lines as steel supports were installed against the wall and a new wall built. While we had use of the kitchen most of this repair, other parts of the house including the laundry room were not available. This project required five different craftsmen whose scheduling and collaboration I had to manage. As a result, I decided that I just did not



Crystal Towers Apartments in Arlington

want the responsibility and worry of homeownership any more.

Sam was not ready to move into a senior facility (after all, he was only 88 at the time!), so we looked at rental apartments. I am a great one for research, so I viewed more than two dozen properties before choosing an apartment in Crystal City. An older building, it had spacious rooms; at 1,600 square feet, it was only 600 square feet smaller than our house. It has a large balcony so I could garden in pots, and plenty of storage – 2 six-foot closets, a small pantry cupboard, and 3 walk in closets.

We chose this location with a new lifestyle in mind. Two blocks from a Metro station, walking distance to our polling place, the library, two grocery stores, Costco and a myriad of other commercial establishments. In-building amenities included a convenience store, a gym, a hair salon, Zumba and yoga classes.

We were half a mile from Restaurant Row.

We moved in late December 2019 and then, again as they say, stuff happened and the pandemic lockdown began less than 3 months later. Many of the lifestyle changes we anticipated making did not happen: we have our groceries delivered, we vote by mail, we Uber instead of Metro when we go downtown.

On the whole, we love our apartment and the ability to call maintenance to fix things but find in a large building (912 units) there is little sense of community as many units are rented by students and people on temporary work assignments who come and go. And as our health continues its inevitable decline, each lease renewal is accompanied by a conversation about whether this is still the best option for us or whether we are ready at last for a senior facility and the sense of community it would bring.

~ Kat Turner



Kat Turner

Clergy & Staff

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

Deacon

[The Rev. Theresa Lewallen](#)

Priest Associate

[The Rev. Dr. Susan Ackley Lukens](#)

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(Need one)

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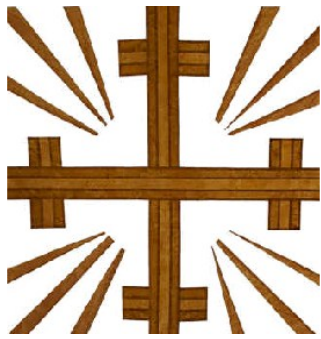
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About InSpire

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
- xxx
- Betsy Faga
- Lea Fowlie, editor
- Lenore Funkhouser, photos
- Eleonora Gafton
- The Rev. Theresa Lewallen
- The Rev. Susan Lukens
- 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.

Living in a retirement community

(Continued from page 5)

Am I the only one who feels this way?

I am reminded of the words to a song Bette Midler sang,
Hello in There.

We had an apartment in the city
Me and my husband liked living there
It's been years since the kids have grown
A life of their own, left us alone

John and Linda live in Omaha
Joe is somewhere on the road
We lost Davy in the Korean war
I still don't know what for, don't matter anymore

You know that old trees just grow stronger
And old rivers grow wilder every day
But old people, they just grow lonesome
Waiting for someone to say
"Hello in there. Hello"

Me and my husband, we don't talk much anymore
He sits and stares through the backdoor screen
And all the news just repeats itself
Like some forgotten dream
That we've both seen

Someday I'll go and call up Judy
We worked together at the factory
Ah, but what would I say when she asks what's new?
Say, "Nothing, what's with you?
Nothing much to do."

You know that old trees just grow stronger
And old rivers grow wilder every day
Ah, but, but old people, they just grow lonesome
Waiting for someone to say
"Hello in There. Hello."

So if you're walking down the street sometime
And you should spot some hollow ancient eyes
Don't you pass them by and stare
As if you didn't care
Say, "Hello in there. Hello."

One day a staff member asked if I would join her in the Small Houses, where full nursing care is provided to

residents. She thought I would enjoy just making small talk with the people there. I had never been and thought it would be interesting.

On about April 24, 1991, I was living in Dhaka Bangladesh. On that night I learned tornadoes struck the city and a tsunami hit the coast with a tidal wave approximately 20 feet high hit the coast, killing about 135,000. President Bush ordered the USS Tarawa to go to Bangladesh to give humanitarian aid; the United States Marines saved thousands of lives over the next 45 days. That day I went to chat with people in the nursing wing, I met the Navy Admiral who was in command that very day in April 1991.

I also met a woman of about 95 who was an architect. Wonderfully interesting; she told me it was so difficult for her as the only woman in the school and in her company for many years.

One of my dearest friends here and favorite person is a fabulously interesting woman of 95 who bravely traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico, for 26 years on her own, because she loved the culture of the city.

~ Margaret Riccardelli