

InSpire

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What's in a name: Abundance Ministry

At its January retreat, Resurrection's Vestry continued the congregational discernment that had begun at our anniversary celebration on Palm Sunday 2024. Our reserves, which we had husbanded during our redevelopment project, had grown to about a million dollars. We then realized that with the successful launch of The Spire and the construction and fitting out of our new church, we had far more funds than we need for a prudent reserve. What was God calling us to do with these funds?

What we learned from our year-long discernment in 2024 is:

- There was support for celebrating our 60th anniversary with donations totaling \$60,000 to some of our important ministry partners: ALIVE!, the Alexandria City Scholarship Fund, and Christ Church's West End Lazarus Ministry.
- Consensus developed that feeding programs, emergency financial assistance, and education were where we wanted to concentrate our efforts.

- Our anniversary giving was seen as a "trial run" for continued discernment about future giving.
- The range of opinion about how much the future giving should be went from none of our reserve funds, to all of them.

Given the discernment, the Vestry quickly decided that our total giving would be \$500,000, allocated equally over a three-year period (2025 – 2027). They affirmed that the categories of giving would continue to be financial assistance, feeding, and education, and added a fourth category to allow for new ideas and innovation. A Vestry committee of Courtenay Brinckerhoff, David Ewing, John Kirk, Gbehlee Savice, and Kat Turner was appointed to oversee this new ministry. But what would we call it?

More than a dozen names were considered, including Love Thy Neighbor, Walk in Love, Impact, and Abundance. The more we talked about it, the more we liked Abundance Ministry (not fund). Why Abundance?

There are many scriptural examples of God's abundant



Mosaic of Jesus' loaves and fishes miracle in Tabgha (image in the public domain)

love for us, starting with the creation story. In the New Testament, one of the most well-known examples of abundance, perhaps because it appears in all four Gospels, is the Loaves and Fishes story. But many of the scriptural references to abundance are not about material abundance but spiritual abundance. And this is how we view the Abundance Ministry. Yes, we will use the material abundance God has given us to do God's work. Yes, we are showing our love for our neighbors. Yes, we want to help those in need. And yes, we remember our biggest learning from building The Spire: God provided everything needed to do what God calls us to do. But we

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The Rev. Jo Belser

“... Lent: the time in the church year in which we are to take a close look at our lives, at our relationships, to see what might need renewing.”

Lent: spring cleaning for the soul

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. (from the Ash Wednesday service)

Many post-modern people think that the concept of “sin” is passe. In fact, I read recently that sin is a “human construct designed by the early religious leaders to promote a patriarchal society and to control the masses through fear-based living.” The writer’s thesis was something akin to, “Take whatever you want in this life because this is all there is.”

However, we Christ-followers know that life isn’t supposed to be “all about me.” We are intended to be in right-relationship with both our Creator and with everyone and everything. When we “miss the mark” of right-relationship, we sin. We sin against our fellow beings when we try to gain at their expense. We sin against creation when we use more of its gifts than we need and without replenishment. We sin against God when we don’t live the way God wants us to live.

Sin as a powerful destructive force. When we sin, our souls are damaged, both directly by the broken relationship and indirectly by the guilt we feel. I believe that our failures at right-relationship change our identity. Some essence at our spiritual core gets tarnished, tainted by sin. The guilt we feel about our sin is more than just a feeling; it is more like an awareness of a

loss in our soul. The longer we live in this degraded condition, the less we seem to experience guilt and the more we sin.

In our best lives, we take stock each day of how we lived into right-relationship and how we might have “missed the mark,” then put things right immediately. However, like the frog that fails to notice his bath water getting deadly hotter, we humans might fail to notice that our spiritual lives might have become suboptimal. Which brings me to Lent: the time in the church year in which we are to take a close look at our lives, at our



The (public domain) image that inspired our church’s Lenten banner

relationships, to see what might need renewing.

For some time, it has been fashionable to “give something up for Lent.” More recently, the practice

has swung toward “taking something on for Lent.” I have spent words in the past urging you to do one or the other of these things. This year I’m taking another approach to Lent: I’m suggesting that we not let either of these practices distract us from examining our lives during Lent and putting right what needs to be righted.

I look forward to sharing Ash Wednesday with you. The ashes given that day will remind us all of our mortality and exhort ourselves to keep Lent a holy time of “spring cleaning for the soul” in preparation for Easter. Our services that day will be at 10:00 am at Cogir and at noon and 7:00 pm at the church. The noon-day service will be both in-person and on Zoom.

I look forward to worshipping at Church of the Resurrection in one 10:00 am service with Bishop Shand on Sunday, March 16—otherwise known as the Second Sunday in Lent. Please plan to Uber or Lyft or carpool or get otherwise creative about parking. The service will be our second opportunity to all worship together here in our still relatively new church building and we will Receive at least one new member into our Church.

~ Rev. Jo

The Great Teacher

At its February meeting, the vestry unanimously accepted the Abundance Committee's recommendation that the Church provide the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria (SFA) an additional \$20,000. In 2024, Church of the Resurrection donated \$18,000 to the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria as part of its 60th anniversary celebration. The Scholarship Fund of Alexandria was carefully vetted at that time; a second review was conducted earlier this year, and it continues to have a sterling record. It is worth noting that in 2024, this organization awarded \$1.4 million of scholarships to over 400 Alexandria City High School students.

The Vestry chose to act on this request now because recent public policy changes have created a very high degree of uncertainty among both students and educators about the availability of federal funds for post-secondary education. Meanwhile, students are beginning to receive responses to their applications to colleges, universities, and trade schools. The Vestry sought to send a strong message that Church of the Resurrection supports the students and educators as they shape their futures.

The donation to the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria should come as no surprise. Education is an extraordinarily high value among Resurrection members. I can think of at

least seven former teachers and librarians in our congregation. Rev. Susan's presentations at various Forums are grounded in her teaching experience. Patrick Coleman's February 16 presentation on mercy continues to resonate for me. He illustrated the broad range of the meaning of the term by placing the Buckingham's (a Chicago based, 1960s rock group) at one end of the spectrum and Shakespeare at the other.

Mercy was a theme close to Shakespeare's heart. Patrick pointed out that one of his most famous passages about mercy comes from *The Merchant of Venice*. In Act 4, Scene 1, Portia delivers a beautiful speech on the quality of mercy. Here's an excerpt:

The quality of mercy is not strained.

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath.

It is twice blest: It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

Portia goes on to explain how mercy is more powerful and honorable than the king's crown, that it is an attribute of God himself, and that justice is not complete without it. The speech is a compelling reminder of the virtue and strength found in acts of mercy.

Jesus is often referred to as the Great Teacher because of His profound teachings and parables. John 13:13-15

(NIV) demonstrates this understanding:

¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.

¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Jesus' teachings often intertwined mercy and justice, demonstrating how both are essential to a balanced and compassionate approach to life.

Balance and compassion are also what the Vestry is trying to achieve as it shares the church's financial abundance. We also increase our spiritual abundance with our investments, especially in education and scholarship. Such donations can draw us closer to Jesus, The Great Teacher.

~ David Ewing



David Ewing

"The Vestry sought to send a strong message that [we support] the students and educators as they shape their futures."



Gifts to the Scholarship Fund in 2024; our 2025 gift will be delivered in early March



Diane Kyle

“Pura vida” in Costa Rica

“Pura vida,” or “pure life,” is an expression in Costa Rica that names a cultural value of living a peaceful, simple, and harmonious life

I got to visit Costa Rica recently, where I was able to immerse myself deeply in worship, share in fellowship, and build relationships, particularly during the ordination of Linda Watts Rankin into the Holy Orders of the diaconate. Linda was ordained in a beautiful bilingual service at St. Mark’s in Limón. There we shared fellowship over breakfast and later celebrated in a joyful community. Linda’s ordination was deeply rich in culture, and the presence of God was palpable. The praise and worship radiated the spirit of Christ, filling the day with joy.

This sacred experience was followed by another profoundly spiritual moment during our visit to [La Paz Waterfall Gardens](#). My first impression of the waterfalls was one of awe at the sheer power of God, and God’s majesty made visible through creation. Watching the waterfall from different angles, front, side, and back I was struck not only by its beauty but also by the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism. My first tangible encounter with this presence came when I placed my hand and then my feet into a pool

of water formed by the waterfall’s cascading stream. The ever-flowing water would continue its journey downstream from the pool of water, creating yet another waterfall. The movement of water gave an image of renewal and continuity. As I dried my feet using palm leaves, assisted by Deacon Alex, I was reminded of the humility and grace of foot washing.

A second powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit also occurred at La Paz during one of the watching points. During that time, the waterfall completely soaked us from head to toe, and we realized that significance of the day, The Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. We took a moment to form a circle, held hands, prayed together, and while we were drenched with water, we felt that at that moment we renewed our baptismal vows. This experience was truly transformative.

This sense of transformation extended into my broader cultural immersion in Costa Rica. Since the country is known for its high-quality coffee, we toured the Britt Coffee plantation in Heredia Province, gaining insight into the artistry behind one of Costa Rica’s most renowned exports. In San

Costa Rica
SPANISH
 Hi = Pura Vida
 Ok = Pura Vida
 Yes = Pura Vida
 How are you = Pura Vida
 I'm fine = Pura Vida
 Thank you = Pura Vida
 You're welcome = Pura Vida
 Bye = Pura Vida

José, I took cooking classes and had the privilege of enjoying traditional meals while staying with my host family.

To further immerse my cultural experience with the arts, I attended a dance class and visited several museums. The most remarkable of these was the Teatro Nacional, located on the southern side of the Plaza de la Cultura in San José. Built in 1897, the theater features statues of Beethoven and the renowned 17th-century Spanish dramatist Calderón de la Barca. My only disappointment was that I could not see a performance there, as the season began after my program had ended.

All in all, this was a truly wonderful experience, and I am deeply grateful to all who made this trip possible. PURA VIDA!

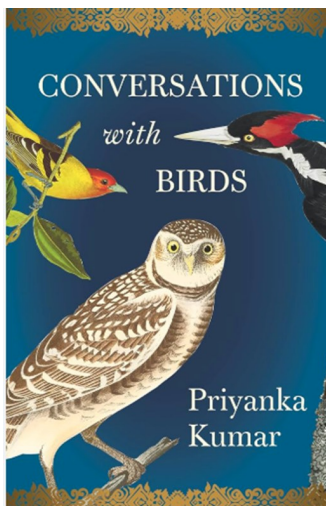
~ Diane Kyle

Judy's thoughts on Lent

I have not given up on chocolate this Lent because my family gave me a good supply for Valentine's Day. Besides, it's good for me in moderation.

My goal during Lent is to continue to keep myself informed about climate change issues because I'm aware of how poor and rich people alike are affected by fires, floods, and the damage and destruction of forests by clear-cutting that will cause loss of habitat for birds, insects, and wildlife.

I will learn and recommend to others the book I'm reading, *Conversation with Birds*, written by Priyanka Kumar. Kumar has an appreciation for all wildlife, including the bobcats and deer that frequent her backyard in New Mexico. So much forest is being lost to cattle that are allowed to graze on government-owned



land. The Bureau of Land Management in the western states also supports the clear-cutting of timber that supports bird and animal life. Lent is a good time to keep myself informed.

I need to work at keeping an upbeat attitude about life and keep my mind set on

positive things. I watched a video series of kittens hugging babies that touched my heart. So much love comes from tiny creatures. There is hope for all of us as we choose to see the love we get from our animal friends.

Also in my Lenten practice, I need to keep praying for people that I think are making poor decisions for our country and the world. I know who ultimately is in charge and I keep reminding myself not to forget!

I will also practice keeping in touch with friends and family even when I don't hear from them in return. They are busy with their own concerns, and I need to be thoughtful of that. Lent is a good time for me to remember who is in charge: not me!

~ Judy Isaacs



Judy Isaacs

To be interrupted by God: A Lenten journey

Life is short and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who journey with us. So be quick to love and make haste to be kind.

Perhaps you remember this blessing that I often said while Rev. Jo was on her sabbatical a few years ago. As we begin these forty days of a Lenten journey, I hear God's calling once again from this blessing.

We are always called by God, but especially for the next forty days, God calls us to walk with Jesus to the cross. We bring not only our

challenges, our despair, our suffering, but we bring also our prayers for a renewal of Holy Grace, assurance that the light of God walked with Jesus and walks with us, too. This, then, is the walk of the Lenten journey that we are about to begin.

However, if Jesus is always walking with us, what makes this Lenten journey and its practices different?

First, let's review the historical practices of Lent that mimic Jesus' time in the wilderness: prayer, fasting, abstinence, repentance, almsgiving, and all these

Lenten practices made official at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. And the *Book of Common Prayer* gives us Lenten liturgy and scripture

You already know all of this. But I believe for the *real* essence of the 40-day journey, is to engage in practices that *interrupt our lives* to be deeply transformed by hearing God speak thru the stranger or seeing Jesus walk amongst us when we feed the homeless.

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The Rev.
Susan Ackley Lukens

To be interrupted by God: A Lenten journey

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The Lenten journey practices this year *must* interrupt our busy lives. I recently heard this phrase: “to be God-smacked.” Yes, that is perfect. The usual pattern of our lives for the next 40 days will be interrupted and we will be God-smacked with the light of Christ when we sense it all around us.

The prophet Isaiah (58:8-9) speaks to his people in exile: *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, And your healing shall spring up quickly; Your vindicator shall go before you, The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.*

God’s light is promised to shine the path ahead for us. But it is not easy because our lives are incredibly complicated; stress abounds. The evening news can be a broken record and overwhelming. I wonder where is justice for the widow, the homeless, and abandoned.

I confess that our lives are incredibly complicated; stress abounds. Surely all of us share concerns for the tragedies continuing in the world around us. On some nights the evening news can be a broken record and overwhelming. Where is justice for the widow, the homeless, the abandoned children in Gaza, Ukraine, and Myanmar?

But I remember that I am not alone in this exile. The

Psalmist’ words hold me in prayer:

O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; My soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, As in a barren and dry land where there is no water.
(Psalm 63:1)

We and *certainly* I need to be interrupted by God in this barren, dry and troubled world.

Isaiah and the psalmist promise the light of God, but I need to find a discipline that will help me hear God. I need to be interrupted and to make a space for prayer and reflection that will turn me around and upside down. In this interrupted space I can then see and be the light of Jesus Christ.

What could be your practices that interrupt the normal pattern of your next 40 days?

- A morning prayer time in silence or reading the entire book of Psalms.
- A silent walk in nature everyday listening to the bird chatter or just relishing the flower buds that are starting to burst forth after a long cold winter season.
- A planned time on the telephone or an e-mail exchange with friends or family far away.
- A daily reading of Luke, our prescribed Gospel for this year.

During Lent, each day I am going to start by meditating on a piece of art first. “[The Art of Lent: a Painting a day](#)

[from Ash Wednesday to Easter](#),” will be my guide.

First, I plan to start my prayer time reflecting on a painting of Sam’s that hangs on a wall in our house. What do you see here?



A painting of Sam’s that hangs on wall in our house

Next, I will reflect on a painting in the Art of Lent: Mondrian, Gainsborough, Rogier van der Weyden, and Monet, to name just a few.

Whichever practice you take on this year, I hope you sing that words of Isaiah to his people in exile or see the psalmist’s vision to be your true heart. A practice that can interrupt your busy life to feel the light of Christ within you, around you and shine it outward as a blessing to others. I know God is calling me ... and calling you, too.

~ Rev. Susan

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Possibilities in Lent: Racial Justice and Healing

Lent calls us to be truthful about our sins, our need for repentance, and turning our hearts and minds to God in an active way. Frequently, we focus only on our individual sin and repentance. [The Litany of Repentance in the Book of Common Prayer](#) (pp. 267-269) reminds us that our sins are also communal.

As we consider ways to focus our lives more deeply on God, it is important to be honest about ourselves and

about the past and present sins of institutions we are part of. This can take a bit more work.

On Sunday, March 9, the team will host the Forum as Rev. Theresa presents the scriptural foundation of the Diocese of Virginia's mission statement: *Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples.* We'll offer some possibilities for your study and meditation during Lent.

The Racial Justice and Healing Team will continue

the book discussion of **The False White Gospel** through Lent. The series continues on March 12, with the final two sessions on March 26 and April 9. This book offers insights into the history of the misuse of Scripture to promote white supremacy and Christian Nationalism—which are deeply embedded in the history of our country and churches. It provides examples of Scripture that

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*The Rev.
Theresa Lewallen*

What's in a name: Abundance Ministry

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also know that the members of Resurrection will be spiritually uplifted by sharing God's abundance this way. We believe this because we saw it happen with our redevelopment project. We are certainly proud of what we accomplished materially, but we all recognized how our discernment, our commitment, and our success affected us spiritually. And this, we believe, will happen with the Abundance Ministry as well.

The Abundance Ministry has agreed on a number of practices that will guide our work in 2025:

- Will only consider requests of \$10,000 or more. The Vestry may consider smaller requests from other funding sources.

- There is no specific target among the four categories, except that at least \$10,000 will be allocated in each category, and no more than 60% for any one of the categories.
- Eligible recipients are local non-profit organizations, including the ministries of other Episcopal Churches especially in the Alexandria Region, the Diocese of Virginia, and the national Episcopal Church. Individuals and for-profit organizations are not eligible.
- All recommendations for funding from the Abundance Ministry will be approved by the Vestry.
- We will not accept solicitations.
- All projects must be Christ-centered and preference will be given to

those which have the potential to foster spiritual abundance in both the recipients and parishioners of Resurrection. In other words, those projects that are transformational to both donors and recipients will be given preference over those that are merely transactional.

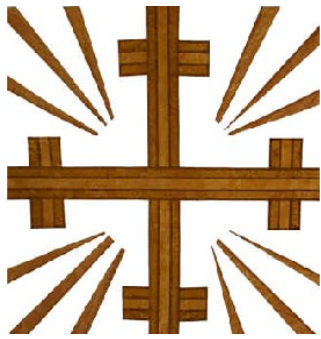
To date, allocations for 2025 have been made to the West End Lazarus Ministry (\$16,000), the West End Food Pantry (\$36,000), and \$20,000 to the Alexandria City Scholarship Fund (see separate article).

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:30)

~ Kat Turner



Kat Turner



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
- David Ewing
- Lea Fowlie, editor
- Lenore Funkhouser, photos
- Judy Isaacs
- Diane Kyle
- The Rev. Theresa Lewallen
- The Rev. Susan Ackley 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.

Possibilities in Lent: Racial Justice and Healing

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counter those arguments, many of which can be used in personal daily Bible study.

We invite you to consider the City of Alexandria Community Remembrance Project's continued work to be honest about the City's history, make it known to others, and work to repair the sins of that history. On March 8, [the City will unveil a new marker at Minnie Howard](#) to mark the integration of what was a White elementary school. In 1954, after the Supreme Court's ruled segregation in schools illegal in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Alexandria opened a white elementary school and rejected Black students with roots in the Seminary community. After winning a

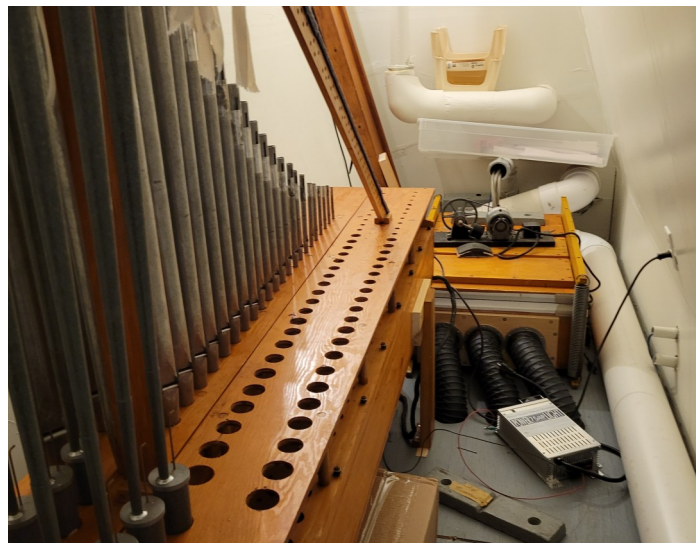
lawsuit against the Alexandria Board of Education, five young Black students of the Belk and Bradby families integrated the white Minnie Howard Elementary School.

As it looks into its own history of racial sin and continues its work of repentance and reparation, Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) shows us the deep connectedness of the Episcopal Church's and the City of Alexandria's role in enslavement, exploitation, and failure to see God in all people and to treat them as Jesus did. VTS maintains the African American Historical Collection in Payne Library. Currently on exhibit is: "[I'm Workin' on a Building: Honoring Black Ministry in the Episcopal Church.](#)" The exhibit includes photographs,

letters, and certificates. The collection also offers oral interviews of people you may know or will become familiar with. Later this year, the Racial Justice and Healing Team will host a Forum on the reparations work being done by VTS.

As you consider how you and how we as a community are going to live a "holy Lent," please reach out to us if you have any questions or would like to become involved in the Racial Justice and Healing, please contact Coral Childs, Amanda Vann, Cynthia Bullard-Perez, Verleah Kosloske, or me.

~ Rev. Theresa



In February, the installation of our organ in our new church building achieved two milestones:

- *The project became four years overdue for completion; and*
- *Some of our (smaller) organ pipes were installed, with the larger ones sent out for mitering.*