

# InSpire

## Where we are in discerning a new mission

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“What does it mean,” I asked myself this week, “if we are discerning what God is calling us to do with a million dollars and all of our ideas are small money-wise, yet significant?” I’ve not come to any one answer to my question. Rather, I have a list of potential answers. Is it:

- That we are, to quote a participant of our October 6 Forums, “old and tired” yet willing to do God’s work?
- That we (pick one) want to or don’t want to simply write checks to help people?
- That we have only relied on our own ideas rather than on God’s?
- That something else that I can’t yet see is at work here: a vision waiting until God wrestles us into willingness to accept it?”

You may have other potential answers, and I would be very interested in hearing your thoughts. Meanwhile, let me tell you what Kat Turner and I learned from the fourth (of four) weeks of discernment Forums on October 6.

On October 6, we asked you to let us know your interest in exploring or participating in ten mission ideas that had been suggested in the three

earlier Forums. Per the ground rules of this discernment process, each idea had to have a champion willing to lead exploration of what would be involved to be considered, and that person’s name is included in parentheses after each idea:

- Pay the \$750 citizenship test application fee for any participant in our English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) ministry and potentially tutor the applicant for the test (Betsy Faga).
- Pay for participants of our ESOL ministry to attend classes at Northern Virginia Community College (Chris Yeannakis).
- Begin a monthly meal to share with our neighbors (Eleonora Gafton).
- Tell people about Jesus and invite them to church (David Maxwell).
- Put solar panels on our building (Judy Isaacs).
- Fill our church with children and families (Bob Noé).
- Continue our Food Pantry ministry with more money and help from the people of Resurrection and beyond (Emily Ewing).

- Find and hire a new staff member to coordinate our Outreach Ministry efforts (Kat Turner).
- Use our church for more community events (Nick King).
- Start a new Newcomer Ministry (Margaret Riccardelli).

Curiously, no one suggested just writing checks to community organizations. So, we asked each person at the Forums on October 6 to let us know two things: Their interest in participating in each mission, then the extent they would be willing to participate.

The strongest interest in participating in each of these ministry suggestions ranged from a high of 92% of all who filled out a survey form to help with our food pantry, to a low of 33% for efforts to get more families with children to attend our church. The top four in terms of percentage of people willing to participate to some extent also included, in addition to helping with the food pantry:

- Offering a monthly meal for our neighbors (83%),

*(Continued on page 4)*



Jo Belser, our Rector

**What we are “up to”**  
*(When you run out of words...)*

Is this not the fast which I choose,  
to loosen the bonds of wickedness,  
to undo the bands of the yoke,  
and to let the oppressed go free  
and break every yoke?

Conquering death at Elancé



Is it not to divide your bread with the  
hungry

Battling hunger at St. James



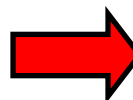
and bring the homeless poor into the  
house;

Challenging poverty  
at Carpenter’s Shelter



when you see the naked, to cover  
him; and not to hide yourself from  
your own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-10)

Sharing love at Hammond School



At 9:00 am on Sunday, October 27,  
we will bag hygiene products to give  
away at the Food Pantry the next day.

## Boo to you

Do you love Halloween, counting down the days until you can get out the bats, cats, and cauldrons? Or are you a Halloween avoider disliking the “scary stuff,” perhaps even finding it “unchristian?” Or are you somewhere in-between?

“Halloween” is a contraction of “All Hallows’ Eve,” the evening before All Hallows (or All Saints) Day on November 1. It is followed by All Souls’ Day on November 2. The three together are called “Allhallowtide.” Like Christmas Eve and Holy Saturday (the evening before Easter) it was traditional for churches to hold vigils on All Hallow’s Eve.

Early Christianity honored all saints and recently departed souls on various dates, usually in the spring. By 800, churches in Ireland and parts of what is now England and Scotland were commemorating All Saints’ Day on November 1. This later became the accepted date in what is now France, Belgium, and parts of Germany. By the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, All Hallows’ Eve celebrations included ringing of church bells and bell ringers dressed in black parading in the streets to remind people to pray for the dead.

If dressing in black wasn’t enough, you could dress in a costume. It was believed that the souls of the departed wandered the earth until All Saints’ Day. All Hallows’

Eve was the last night the dead could seek revenge on their enemies. To avoid being recognized by any soul that might be seeking revenge, people would wear masks or costumes.

There were other opportunities for wearing costumes. Churches in Europe that were too poor to own relics of martyred saints had parishioners dress up as saints during Allhallowtide. Another opportunity for costume wearing was the Danse Macabre or Dance of Death. Many Christians in mainland Europe, especially in France, believed that on All Hallows’ Eve the dead rose from their graves for a dance. People dressed up and re-enacted this dance as a reminder that all things here on earth end.

Trick-or-treating dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when it was customary to bake “soul cakes” for Allhallowtide to commemorate the dead. These were small round cakes resembling a shortbread biscuit but with sweet spices. They were often marked with a cross to indicate they were baked as alms (food for the poor). These cakes were common in parts of England, Wales, Belgium, Germany, and Austria.

Groups of poor people, often children, would go “souling.” They went door-to-door during Allhallowtide, collecting soul cakes in exchange for praying for the dead,

especially the givers’ friends and family. The “soulers” would eat the soul cakes as representatives of the deceased.

Souling also led to the jack o’lantern. Soulers carried lanterns made of hallowed out turnips. It’s not clear if they represented the souls of the dead or if they were meant to ward off evil spirits. Either way, they are ancestors of today’s pumpkin jack o’lanterns.

Visiting the cemetery at Allhallowtide was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Candles, called “soul lights,” were placed on graves on All Souls Day to guide souls back to visit their earthly homes. Offerings of food and drink were also left at graves.

Many of these customs disappeared during the Reformation when many Protestant churches saw them as “popish.” While they were no longer official church customs, they continued in communities around the world.

As the owners of several black cats, my family likes to see our beloved pets get their long overdue recognition on Halloween. Whatever your thoughts on Halloween, keep in mind its Christian roots as you celebrate, or not, this year. As for our black cats, they’re just like other cats. They want to take over the world.

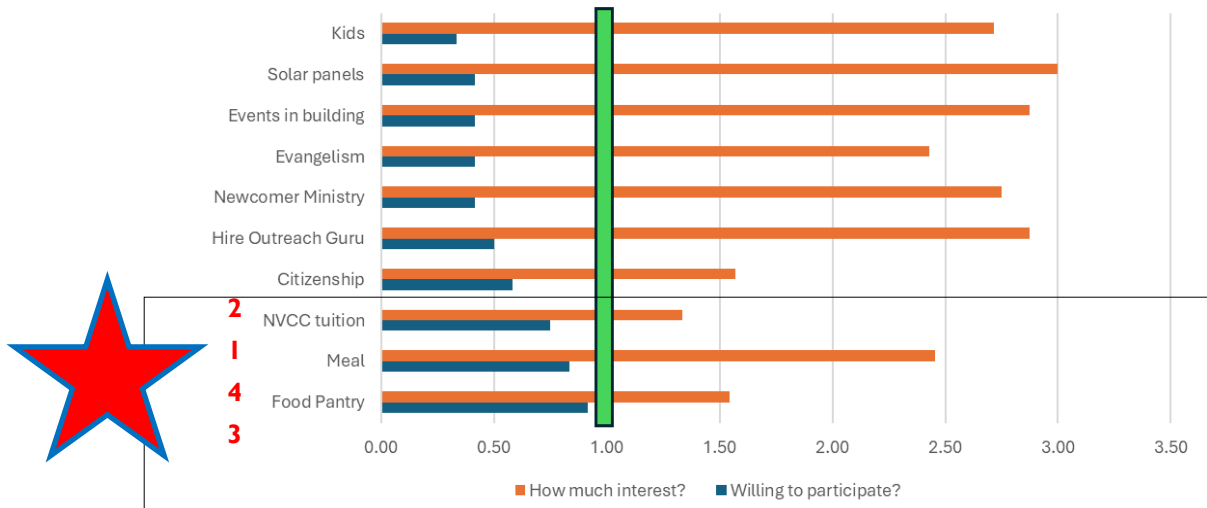
~ Coral Childs

*“Whatever  
your thoughts  
on Halloween,  
keep in mind  
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roots as you  
celebrate, or  
not, this year.”*

## Where we are in discerning a new mission

*(Continued from page 1)*

Results of October 6 Forum



*The closer to 1.0 each ministry has, the stronger the interest and willingness to participate*

- Paying Northern Virginia Community College tuition for ESOL participants (75%), and
- Paying the citizenship test fee for ESOL participants and potentially tutoring them for the test (58%).

The other measure of response let us know how much people are willing to participate in each of the ten ministry suggestions. As it turns out, the same four categories got the most interest in addition to willingness to participate. The way that the responses were calculated, the closer to 1.0 the ministry scored, the higher the interest. In other words, a 1.0 for “Willingness to participate?” means everyone surveyed

said they would participate to some extent. Also, a 1.0 for “How much interest?” means 100% of the people who filled out the form said they have a “Strong level of interest [and] would definitely lead or participate regularly.”

You can see the range of potential participation and strength of the interest in the chart at the top of this page. The darkest bar on the chart shows the “willingness to participate” response for each ministry idea. The lighter bar on the chart shows the extent that of people’s willingness to participate. When you consider these two measures together, the ministry ideas closest to 1.0 on both categories are *currently* NVCC tuition (1),

citizenship assistance (2), food pantry (3), and a monthly meal (4).

Although we haven’t yet gotten to the heart of our goal of discerning what God is calling us to do with the money God has given us, our discernment Forums so far have given us:

- A potential starting point for future discernment,
- Missions to explore and/or do in the meantime, and
- A list of people who are willing to help explore each mission.

In the meantime, if you haven’t yet submitted your input, ask Angie Armwood to send you a survey form.

~ Rev. Jo



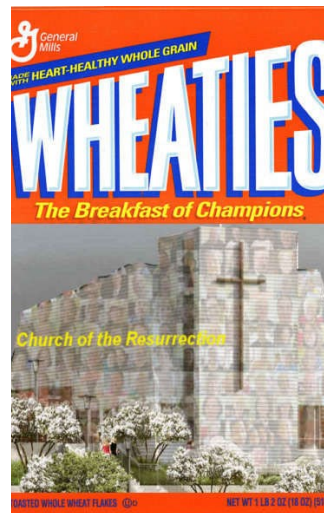
## We belong on a Wheaties box

Many of us start our day with a bowl of cereal. Do you eat Frosted Flakes? “They’re grrreat.” Maybe you have a second childhood with Trix. “Silly Rabbit, Trix are for kids.” Were you a picky eater who only ate Life? “He likes it! Hey Mikey.” Resurrection’s official cereal should be Wheaties, the “Breakfast of Champions.” Because that’s what we are: champions.

David Ewing and I were honored to represent Church of the Resurrection at the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria’s (SFA) Breakfast of Champions on September 17 at The Garden. This event was a chance for SFA’s donors and supporters to gather, learn about each other’s passions, and hear news from the SFA. The event featured guest speakers who

are past award recipients and are committed to working with youth in the Alexandria school system.

As part of our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Church of the Resurrection donated \$18,000 to the SFA: \$10,000 for its general fund and \$4,000 each to the Joseph McCoy Memorial Scholarship Fund and to the Benjamin Thomas Memorial Scholarship Fund. The McCoy Scholarship is for students planning to go into a trade and can be used for community college or to obtain job skills, certifications, and licensures. The Thomas Scholarship is for students planning to earn a college degree in social justice of a truth telling field, such as history, journalism, law, art, education, or the ministry.



The SFA has awarded over 5,500 awards since 1986, and the work of the Alexandria community and individual donors has helped change the lives of many families, friends, and community members.

~ Coral Childs

## In the spirit of “Matilda”

*“Never do anything by halves if you want to get away with it. Be outrageous. Go the whole hog.” (From Matilda by Roald Dahl)*

Inspired by Matilda and fortified with your generous donations, David Ewing and I attend “Bag Day” at the Beatley Central Library on September 23. For those of you who don’t know, on “Bag Day” patrons purchase a Friends of the Library tote bag for \$10 and then however many used books they can squeeze into the bag is theirs.

David and I headed for the children’s section to restock for our Little Free Library

and to acquire books to give away at the Hammond Community Market on the third Thursday of each month. We got a workout, eventually purchasing approximately 120 pounds of books, 275 to be exact.

Our purchases for middle schoolers included *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, *Holes*, and *Hatchet*. Our picture book selections included *Owl Moon*, *Make Way for*

*Ducklings*, *Curious George*, and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.

The next book sale at Beatley Central Library is in April 2025. You’ll be hearing from us!

Please note: we are not currently accepting books for adults. We have plenty! Thank you for your generosity.

~ Coral Childs

## Clergy & Staff

### Rector

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

### Deacon

[The Rev. Theresa Lewallen](#)

### Priest Associate

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

### Associate Clergy

[The Rev. Jon Scarff](#)

### Director of Music

Vacant

### October Pianist

Liliya Petrosyan

### November/

### December Pianist

Dr. Linda Hayes Bennett

### Bookkeeper

MaryEllen Tibbs

### Parish

### Administrator

Angie Armwood

### Seminarians

Kate Mumey

Diane Kyle

### Sexton

Beltway Cleaning, Inc.

## Farewell to Rev. Jon



Congratulations to the Church and to Rev. Jon on his September 28 ordination to the Priesthood. He begins as Assistant to the Rector for Pastoral Care at a church in Richmond on October 27. We give great thanks to God and to Rev. Jon for the time he spent with us at Church of the Resurrection.

## Autumn reflection

As I sit at my desk looking out the windows, I can see some of the changes in leaf color. There is a greater dappling of yellows and reds in the trees. Plants are dying. The squirrels are frantically scurrying about preparing for winter. There is birdsong but to my ears, the sounds are different than the birdsong of the other seasons. There seems a type of urgency.

Someone once wrote “Autumn is so wonderful and wise: yet everything is dying” Yet even in fall each one of us can appreciate and cherish the beauty all around us. To cherish one another. Fall offers us a time to reflect on the darkness and light, sorrows and joys, wonders and wisdom of the ongoing changes that find their way into our lives.

On a personal level, it is allowing me time to reflect on my priestly ordination and the

changes it is already bringing into my life.

Change is ever-present. As we read in Ecclesiastes 3:1, “To everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under heaven”. And yet as we observe the changes around us it is important to remember that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) and that, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” (Psalm 18:2)

For many autumn is a time of mystery as we watch the leaves turn colors, drop from their branches, and create humus for new growth. Autumn is a time to ponder where we’ve been, where we’re going, and why we’re here. It’s an ongoing reminder that the only permanence is

impermanence, the only moment is now, and the gift of Life is always Here and “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Autumn also gives us a time to reflect on our baptismal calling, on a life of service to God and each other:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. (St. Francis of Assisi)*

~ Rev. Jon

## Listen, learn, pray, and vote as an expression of your faith

As a deacon, my ministry outside the church can shape and inform my ministry and preaching within. In September, I had opportunities to participate in local, state, national, and wider Episcopal Church events.

We are pleased that African Communities Together invited Resurrection to send two representatives to the listening sessions they held with residents at The Stratford at Southern Towers. Betsy Faga and Bea Taylor represented us. They reported that the residents' concerns mirrored those we heard when we participated with VOICE at an August listening session in another Southern Towers building. VOICE will use this information, and the listening session feedback heard by other faith communities around Alexandria, to build its plan for the coming year.

The Episcopal Church (TEC) brought together people from around the church to Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) for a Truth-Telling and Reparations Summit. We heard from leaders around the church who are actively working on truth-telling and reparations actions. Some dioceses, like ours, have passed resolutions to create reparations funds and design processes for distributing them. Some parishes, including several in

Virginia, have begun their own deep look at their history as enslavers and participants in supporting Indian Boarding Schools. The staff at VTS agreed to assist parishes with their research efforts. During our small group discussions, we responded to presentations, shared ideas, and made concrete plans on next steps. I have agreed to meet with some City of Alexandria officials to ask specific questions about reparations and the status of the City's work.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry participated in two Webinars: [Vote Faithfully](#) and his final meeting with Sacred Ground facilitators across the church. Sacred Ground work will continue in the years ahead. Next year, I'll ask you to plan with me and the Racial Justice and Healing Team about specific ways we should engage again with Sacred Ground actions.

As we look ahead to the election, I recommend that you view [Vote Faithfully](#). The Presiding Bishop outlines the theological premise for voting and provides some biblical verses for study. The deacons of the Diocese of Virginia have created a prayer booklet related to the election. We will share that across the diocese once we have Bishop Stevenson's approval. We are also scheduling seven days of

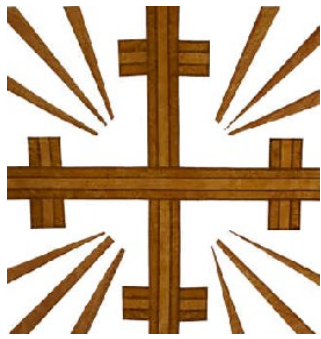


prayer before the election. Church of the Resurrection will hold Compline on Zoom at 7:00 pm on the evening before the election. The Episcopal Church and other faith groups will hold online prayer services on election day. Details are in *e-Notes*.

Our Racial Justice and Healing work together and with the community continues with God's help.

~ Rev. Theresa

*Note that no one here is telling you who or what to vote for—just vote as an act of your faith in action.*



## Church of the Resurrection

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Alexandria 22311-2220

### 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
- The Rev. Jon Scarffe

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.

## “Resolved, Never Again”

Where were you on September 21, 2022? This was the day hundreds of Alexandrians gathered to collect soil from the sites where Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas were lynched in Alexandria in 1897 and 1899, respectively. In October 2022, 165 Alexandrians and others—including Reggie Hayes—made pilgrimage to carry this sacred soil to the Equal Justice Initiative’s National Memorial for Peace and Justice and Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama.

I attended the premiere of “[Resolved: Never Again](#)” on September 21, 2024, a movie which commemorates this event. Emmy-award winning journalist Robin Hamilton created the 50-minute film to document Alexandria’s dedication to telling the whole truth of this city’s history.

Slavery has always been a part of Alexandria’s past, and it continued here until 1861 when Union Troops took control of the city. After the Civil War, when segregationists shut down all opportunities for African Americans to exercise their hard-earned civil rights, the lynchings of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas terrorized Alexandria’s Black residents.



*Jars of soil the City of Alexandria collected to commemorate the two lynchings documented in the City of Alexandria*

In the film, Mayor Justin Wilson, former Police Chief Don Hayes, and Sheriff Sean Casey talk about the importance of acknowledging and taking responsibility for past actions and inactions. Joseph McCoy’s descendant Debra White shares her family’s experience learning about this history and then joining Alexandria to confront it.

The film captures the impact of the Equal Justice Initiative’s Remembrance Movement from exposing uncomfortable truths, to honoring the lives and deaths of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas with

historic markers, a soil collection and pilgrimage.

The Racial Justice Committee at Church of the Resurrection is looking into how to show this movie for parishioners and other interested people.

*~ Coral Childs*

Note: This movie is also showing, for free admission with registration, on Friday, November 8, at the Beatley Library as part of the Alexandria Film Festival.