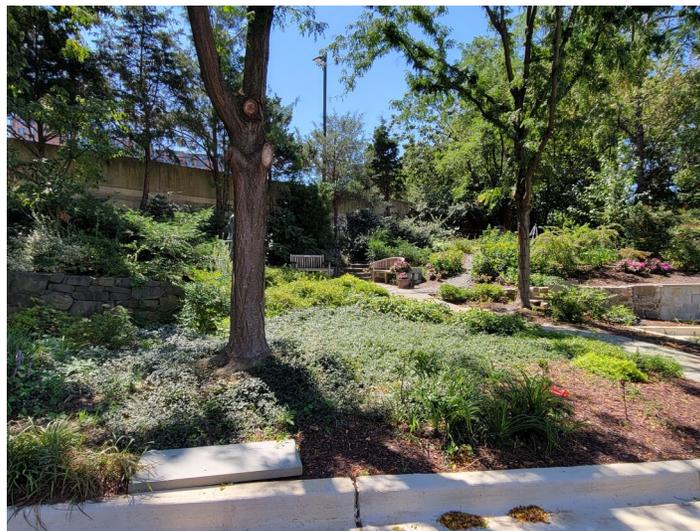


# InSpire

## Our Memorial Garden is renovated



Our beautiful Memorial garden

Started in about 1985 as a joint venture with Goodwin House Alexandria (GHA), our Memorial Garden has 82 sets of ashes interred in it, all without containers and in unmarked spots because it is not a cemetery. The garden is available for meditation, relaxation, and interments to all in the three entities who share our hilltop. It has been developed and maintained by Church of the Resurrection volunteers and funds all these years, keeping its beautiful stone walls and design.

The garden got little attention for over two years during construction of The Spire and our new church. In September 2020, a few of us

decided to start restoring the then totally overgrown site. Poke weeds went unchallenged for so long that they had grown rock-hard tubers larger than yams and the plants topped 7 feet. Vines plagued the surviving plants and had to be dug out completely. Finally, this spring we were able to lay thick leaf mulch over the most difficult spots and the weeds abated. In the spring of 2021, the mature oak tree on the upper right side died due to an untreatable virus and was removed by GHA, on whose property it actually stood.

Which brings me back to GHA. The property line

between GHA and Resurrection goes across the width of the garden paralleling the GHA garage wall, about 25 feet from it. This means that GHA owns more than half of the Memorial Garden land.

Enhanced safety and access are the most important future goals; we are working with GHA to create safer paths and railings. To our delight, Ms. Theresa Thomas, GHA's Associate Executive Director of facility management, has agreed to provide significant funds to help repair the patio, add a path up the right hill, and add a new patio at the upper right. We expect to contribute significantly, as well.

In addition to removing the dead oak tree, GHA is also undertaking the renovation of plantings in the area to the immediate right of their parking garage entrance.

Back to the oak. With its removal, we found ourselves with a sun garden for the first time and much focus has been on how to redesign the hillside with drought resistant, sun-loving perennials to limit future water usage and maintenance.

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Jo Belser, our Rector

## 2021 Vestry

### Senior Warden

Susie Jones

### Junior Warden

Carolyn McDonald

### Treasurer (ex officio)

Ken Gay

### Register (ex officio)

Kim Hildred

### Building (ex officio)

Betsy Faga

### Community

#### Ministries

Ruth Allen

Cynthia Bullard-Perez

Barbara Langford

### Mission and Outreach

Maureen Bryant

Peggy Tiedemann

### Parish Care

Dick DeMeester

Dorothy Pennant

### Worship

Lawrence Huskin

### Adult Education

Ray Isaacs

### Children and Youth

Ken Payne

### Communications

Susan Weber

## Called to create community?

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb. 10:24-25)

I have been listening to your ideas about a new mission for our church. At first hearing, the ideas seem unconnected, except that they are all *our* ideas:

- Caring for creation
- Feeding hungry people
- Providing things people need but can't afford, like hygiene products and diapers for their children
- Starting a Girl Scout Troop in The Spire
- Connecting in other ways with residents of The Spire and Goodwin House
- "Adopting" an immigrant family (which we, in effect, have already quietly done)
- Making our 9:00 am Sunday service more family-friendly
- Taking a "next step" in racial justice work

It occurs to me, though, that we are describing various ways of being the community church beyond our walls in our Beauregard Corridor of the West End of Alexandria.

The remarkable thing about this "vision" is that there hasn't really been a

community center in our part of the city before. Our neighbors were three high-rise retirement buildings and no one spent much time outside. As individuals, we visited our neighbors, or they us, but there was no community space between and among us.

Our neighbors from The Spire are outside a lot, not so much in the courtyard surrounded by the housing, but on the corner of North Beauregard Street and Fillmore Avenue. Smokers have to leave the property to smoke. Parents meet their children's school busses. People walk north along Beauregard Street to the restaurants, grocery store, and Starbucks that are now at the corner of Route 7. Bus riders and car service users await their rides. Workers at Goodwin House walk from their parking at Northern Virginia Community College. Some residents of The Spire and Goodwin House visit our Memorial Garden for a peaceful view of the beauty of creation or our parking lot to retrieve their cars. How can we be "present" for this new activity around us?

Members of Bethel Ethiopian Evangelical Church, which worships in

our building, recently spent a Saturday morning talking to people outdoors here. They report five new members as a result, all Ethiopians who live in The Spire and want to worship in their native language. What "native language," so to speak, can we offer to those we meet on premises?

I am delighted that some Goodwin House residents who garden have joined our gardeners in rehabilitating our Memorial Garden. I am hopeful that our StepALIVE! Walk around our block might draw the future participation of our neighbors. I look forward to next year's pet blessing to be in the courtyard of The Spire.

I don't know how any of your great ideas might "catch Spirit" among us. What I know for sure is that the Spirit is at work among us and that whatever we truly discern as our next mission we will achieve. God is always calling us to new ventures in his name. What do you hear God calling us to do? And how will you participate?

~ Rev. Jo

## An invitation to reflect

The past two years have presented me with great challenges centered around the loss of community due to COVID-19. This sense of loss was intensified when the country shutdown six months after moving to Virginia, and onto the Seminary campus. Like so many others, I am feeling exhausted! I am, however, surprised that I have also begun seeing the abundance of God everywhere. Yes, everywhere during this pandemic. I see God's abundance in the baby deer that grazes outside of my window, the "youngsters" in this year's class at VTS, the number of queer people on and around campus, the instability of our democracy and government, the availability of vaccinations for COVID-19, and the number of deaths from COVID-19. The abundance of God is all around me.

However, I must acknowledge the sense of loss that I am feeling. I missed celebrating my son's college graduation in person, and the big party I wanted to throw for him. After some years he decided that he did want a degree, and I'm telling you that I wanted to kill the fatted calf and break out the best wines! I feel the loss of family visits, as my father grows older, and great nieces, nephews and cousins are born whom I can't visit. I feel the loss of hugs given

and received as my friends survive cancer and the loss of parents. I feel the loss of friendships that never flourished because we had to go into shut down. There have even been days when I've felt the loss of God as our world seemed to turn upside down.



Loss, pain, suffering, grief, and joy are present among us. I am learning to look beyond what is present for what is not present. I suffer from chronic pain and, after an extended period of bearable pain, I am experiencing bouts of intense pain. What's not seen is the absence of fear when my body needs to shut down because I don't have to worry about feeding my kids or keeping a roof over our heads. I have sick days and don't fear losing my job if I am ill. The story of what is present, is as important as what is not.

The presence of The Spire apartment building is as important as the absence of the previous church building. When we look at The Spire it is important to

see the 113 units that provide homes for families. It is equally as important that we remember the lives of all those who celebrated baptisms, deaths, weddings, feast days, etc., in the previous building, and that we acknowledge that it is upon their foundation that

these families rest. It is important that we give thanks for those who were before us, and the many gifts left to us. We must be good stewards of that which we have been entrusted, both spiritually and physically. We must remember that none of it "belongs" to us but is for the building of the Kingdom. May we grow the Kingdom in our little area of the world and entrust abundant gifts to the generation to follow.

I invite you to reflect on the loss and abundance that is in your life, particularly as it relates to the pandemic. I hope that you will seek to see what is not so obviously present, remembering what is present is as important as what is not.

~ Cynthia Bullard-Perez



Cynthia Bullard-Perez

*"The story of what is present, is as important as what is not."*

### 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*:

- Jimena Amurio, Design
- The Rev. Jo Belser
- Cynthia Bullard-Perez, Acquisitions
- Betsy Faga
- Lea Fowlie, editing
- Lenore Funkhouser, photos
- Reggie Hayes
- Susie Jones
- Carolyn McDonald
- Helen McIlvaine
- Kat Turner
- Susan Weber

## Warden's Word: worship, fellowship, and mission abound



Susie Jones, our  
Senior Warden

*"...on October  
24 our pantry  
celebrates its  
fifth  
anniversary."*

We had a beautiful fall day on Sunday, October 3, for our worship service with Fairlington Presbyterian Church at Fort Ward Park. It was a joy to be able to sing during the outside service, and I look forward to the time we can resume singing during our regular indoor services. One of the songs, "Let us build a house," was especially appropriate since Fairlington Presbyterian is also building affordable housing on its property. After the service there was a pet blessing for the many dogs of all sizes that were present or pictures of those pets who stayed at home. We enjoyed a picnic lunch and fellowship with the group after the service. It

was great to see people who are unable to worship with us indoors.

On October 17 we will have our annual StepALIVE! Walk at the church after Rev. Susan's Forum. This Forum will be in-person and on Zoom so that we can do both the Forum and walk. Our route will be from the parking lot down the Fillmore hill, turning at Beauregard and going toward the church then up the 40 steps of our "The Stairway to Heaven." I hope you can join the group and support ALIVE!.

Speaking of our food pantry, on October 24 our pantry celebrates its fifth anniversary. What a blessing

this ministry has been to our community and to us, feeding over 28,000 people! In September it fed 619 people from 176 families. Thank you, all who quietly make this ministry happen.

We provided dinner for Carpenter's Shelter on Sunday, September 5. Many thanks to the dedicated people who cook and deliver the food.

Kat Turner has been nominated to join the Virginia Diocesan Homes Board. VDH helps churches provide affordable housing on their property and Kat will share with them what we learned during our project.

~ Susie Jones

## Meet our handyman



Susan Weber

Resurrection now has an official handyman, Patrick Healy, to help put finishing touches into our new church. For several decades Patrick has been the Weber family's handyman. There's not much he can't do – except plumbing. Patrick is Irish to the core, with a brogue that is unmistakable. He was born in Killarney, a town in County Kerry, in the middle of 11 children. He was raised on a dairy farm. He left as a teenager to go

to England and then came here to the DC area when some of his brothers already here applied for green cards for the family. He has lived here ever since and has long been a citizen. He started out as a painter and gradually added a long list of additional skills over the years. If you drive by Charles Barrett school, he built the outside seating in front of the school door.

Patrick says he is "six foot five with his hair combed straight back and has lived

59 years on this earth." In his spare time, he likes to watch soccer and other sports.

He is looking forward to meeting members of the congregation, so if you see a very tall stranger introduce yourself. Although he is a "fallen away" Catholic he hopes to visit a service and meet as many of us as possible.

~ Susan Weber

## Let me tell you about our 8 am service on Sundays

When I asked to join Church of the Resurrection in late April, Rev. Jo welcomed me and told me about my Sunday worship options. As a very early riser during the week, I was delighted to learn of a service at 8 am.

Rev. Jo cautioned that the 8 am service doesn't include music, a huge talent here and an important worship element. But I love the quiet, calm, and clarity of the morning and putting worship "first" in my day would prioritize my commitment and limit other distractions. I am a new grandmother, so 11<sup>th</sup> hour requests for "help" are a joyous privilege: I could attend church at 8 and be on "Minnie-duty" by 10, if asked!

Several months into being a regular, I can report that I **love** the 8 am service, although I have less-than-perfect punctuality. Before May, I had never noticed how long the traffic lights along Beaugard take to change on a weekend. I have even (ahem "thought about," yes, "thought about) running red lights.

The minyan that gathers at 8—the dozen or so of us in person, and the worshippers who join us virtually—reflects all that makes Resurrection so special to me: the congregation gathered is diverse, faithful, and friendly. You are not a stranger long. When the

service begins, the online group is usually gently admonished that we are starting because they are still cheerfully chatting, laughing, and catching up with one another. As a new member this demonstrates the connectedness others feel, despite distance and the vagaries of technology. Although the hour is early to many people, to me the level of participation and engagement throughout the service is extraordinary as everyone joins in prayers and petitions and, despite our masks, the smiles and waves offered as we exchange the Peace are warm and expressive.

Most importantly, every Sunday at 8 am I receive what I need to sustain me most through the week ahead: a sermon that, while focused on the readings of the day, provides a message and inspirational insights that are somehow relevant to all that happens during the next six days. The sermons of the multiple preachers I have heard over the last four months have been pithy, personal, academic, anecdotal, inspirational, and aspirational. The sermons are always worth my time and my prayer. During the pandemic, I have begun using the store of business cards in my handbag—obsolete in these days of virtual meetings—to record notes. I jot down a phrase or quote from the sermon

stealthily to reflect on further. Last weekend, I accidentally distributed some of these cards when I met with a group of community leaders. On Monday, one leader called to let me know that she received a card on which I had scribbled, "Christianity is not a set of beliefs, but a way of life." Did I need it back? I assured her it wasn't necessary to return the card and apologized. I said I hoped it hadn't offended her. She responded that the note reached her at a moment when she felt she needed it. Phew, and thank you, Holy Spirit!

The 8 am service offers all I had hoped for, and more. The worship space is beautiful and I can't wait to see how the light and the view out the windows is transformed by the change of seasons. The small and steady group that gathers has room (and parking) for others who may be interested in coming to a service that sets the tone for the day and the week by delivering an early message that both challenges and comforts them spiritually.

Although I am still discerning what I can offer, I am very grateful for the welcome, Words, and wonderful Christian example that Rev. Jo and my new 8 am friends provide each week. I am sure of Christ's presence among us.

~ Helen McIlvaine



Helen McIlvaine

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*"The 8 am service offers all I had hoped for, and more."*

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Betsy Faga

*“We are now insisting the organ be operational for Christmas.”*

## Our building inches toward completion

Here’s what’s happened over the last month:

- Landscaping continued on Beauregard Street. Doesn’t it look great?
- The Spire and the Church each received final Certificates of Occupancy on October 6. This is a major accomplishment.
- AHC now has a punch list for the apartment building and grounds. We have at least three items on the list.
- Remaining on the church’s interior punch list is removal of a water stain on the ceiling in the narthex, repairs in the Rector’s office, and issuance of Earthcraft certification.
- Our audiovisual consultant installed connections for our livestreaming equipment at the back of the nave and made other improvements. However, we’re still fine-tuning the system.
- Apparently, installation of our organ is a victim of COVID and the entire industry being in a slowdown due to shortness of help. Our organ builder is still waiting on the mixture stop, the electronic relays, and a few other needed components. We are now insisting the organ be operational for Christmas.
- We have learned that the City will not accept any type of lock on the trash room door that can be opened by combination, nor will it pick up yard debris. Parishioners will be performing these tasks.

~ Betsy Faga

## We hosted the Planning Commission

At the request of the Alexandria Office of Planning and Zoning, Resurrection was pleased to host the Planning Commission’s annual retreat on August 24. This is one of the groups that had approved plans for The Spire and the church.

The retreat was attended by 6 members of the Commission, 13 staff, and 1 member of the public.

The Commission reviewed principles of its responsibility, including:

- The value of development,
- Tree canopies,
- How staff negotiates community benefits with developers,

- How plans are implemented, and
- Engagement with the public.

The members of the retreat also previewed projects that would be coming before them in the fall and winter. The meeting concluded with a tour of The Spire.

Of particular interest to Resurrection was how nicely our new building accommodated a group of this size. With all the tables set up in the parish hall in a hollow square, the Commissioners were able to sit at the table socially distanced. Staff spread themselves around the perimeter and in the narthex. Two tables in the pantry held box lunches and beverages.

I particularly wanted to share two special comments. I saw that one Commissioner—who I know through our mutual City work—arrived early enough to sit in the Memorial Garden for about 20 minutes. As he entered, he again gave high praise for what Resurrection has done and said how peaceful the garden is. Then, at the conclusion of the meeting, the Commission’s Chair gave huge thanks to Resurrection for hosting the group. But more importantly, he said they approve so many projects, but seldom see them. It was a special treat for them to be at Church of the Resurrection.

~ Betsy Faga

## Clergy & Staff

### Rector

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

### Priest Associate

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

### Seminarian Intern

[Reggie Hayes](#)

### Seminarian

[Samson Mamour](#)

### Director of Music

Deena Jaworski

### Organist

Currently vacant

### Bookkeeper

MaryEllen Tibbs

### Parish Communicator

[Jimena Amurio](#)

### Sexton

Zewdi Taddese

## Greetings from “The Traveling Man”

*Dear Episcopal Church,*

*I, Reggie Hayes, long for a relationship with you; I no longer need to pretend anything. The clue to the answer is in the awakening within myself of the sense of living my life consciously in God’s presence. The habit of exposing my life—motives, dreams, desires of Priesthood, sins—all to God makes for my integrity. Out of this flows the virtue of your act. So, search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts: If there is a lower class, I am of it; if there is a criminal element, I am in it; if there is a woman, child, or man in jail, I am not free.*

On September 19, 2021, I—Reggie Hayes—became an extension of the Episcopal Church through Confirmation. The Holy Spirit began to groan inside of me during the affirmation of the Nicene Creeds, “he suffered death.” Yet, at that moment, I could feel a warm embrace and a still voice say, “go and take little Reggie by the hand and guide him past all those difficult moments in life, up

to this very point, and say to him, I cannot change the past, but I can help you move forward through this new door of faith.” Here I am, but how did I get in here without a wedding robe? God’s mercy and grace endure forever. Thank you, Church of the Resurrection. Love is what love does.

Sincerely,

~ Bro. Reggie Hayes



Reggie Hayes—with by Bishop Porter Taylor, Rev. Susan, and Rev. Jo—at his September 18 Confirmation

## Meet our Memorial Garden

*(Continued from page 1)*

As a benefit, we are also planting pollinators throughout that side, along with evergreen shrubs that will hold a beautiful appearance through the winter. Thanks to contributions from St. Clement’s garden, we have abundant beds that will provide stronger pollination next year.

Our team of workers has grown to 16 and includes

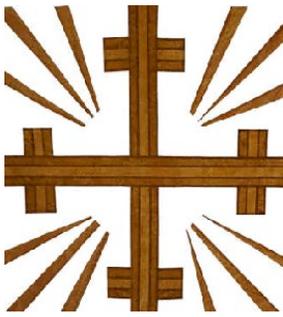
active gardeners and people who manage our tools, and fetch supplies. We held a coffee in the garden on September 11; the 10 who could attend talked hopes for the hardscape mentioned above. We are now planning to have three tool-storing benches built like one we spotted at Shrine Mont, to give expanded seating for meditation and to distribute a set of tools to each of the

three major areas of this large and hilly space. We are even installing a rain-proof trashcan for the items people wish to dispose there.

We invite all at Church of the Resurrection, GHA, and The Spire to enjoy this space.

~ Carolyn McDonald

*“The garden is available for meditation, relaxation, and interments to all ... who share our hilltop.”*



## Church of the Resurrection

2800 Hope Way  
Alexandria 22311-2220



Kat Turner

## Our “New Discernment” Prayer

Father, we thank you for keeping us safe in this pandemic. Once again, we ask you for the courage, wisdom, energy, patience, and joy needed to discern what you are asking us to do next. Please keep us together as a church as we strive to be your hands, voices, and hearts in our community and in the world. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

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 13 units of affordable housing to its community.

## Discerning new missions? Yes, please.

Our first two discernment Forums have revealed a number of things about Church of the Resurrection. First, there is no real interest in resting on our laurels and considering that we have done enough now that we are finished with our Bold Idea. Instead, our success in building a new church and affordable housing and our resiliency throughout this mission and the pandemic seem to have sparked a new confidence in our ability to do things to help others. Quoting Susan Weber, Rev. Jo has said, “Resurrection is a little church that does big things.” The congregation seems to agree!

The first discernment Forum identified things we lost during pursuit of our Bold Idea. We identified losses such as our old building, abundant parking, and pews, but the list of things we gained was considerably longer. This list included closer relationships with Virginia Theological Seminary and Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill, a balanced budget, great visibility in the city and from Beauregard Street, and a brand new church with flexible space. We also said that our faith deepened as

we saw God at work and our focus changed from “We are going to die” to “We are going to live.” Taking on new challenges was seen as living into our mission statement and making a difference to address community needs.

In the second Forum, participants named ongoing or new ideas for which they had interest and passion. Not surprisingly, there was strong support for existing ministries like the food pantry and providing hygiene bags to people in need. But there was also a list of dozens of other potential activities where people could see a need for Resurrection's engagement.

Initially there seems to be strong interest in activities for the stewardship of creation related to climate change; identifying some way to connect with residents, particularly children, in The Spire; and perhaps to a lesser extent to finding a follow-on for the racial justice work of our Sacred Ground class. There was strong agreement with the sentiment that we should be thinking about ways we can do things together with our neighbors, with them and not to them or for them.

In this regard it is helpful to know that AHC's Resident Services unit is planning to survey residents to see what they identify as their most pressing needs.

Our Rector characterizes what she heard as a desire to create community with our neighbors and to be the neighborhood church for and with the community we create. Does this ring true for you? And, what will we do next? Well, we are still discerning, identifying possibilities, and considering which new things we can tackle.

The two more discussion Forums we have scheduled should help us sort through our options to see where we have not just the passion, but also the volunteer and financial resources to succeed. It also seems that many of the things we are interested in are also on the agenda of other churches and organizations, and it may be that the collaboration model that has been so successful with the food pantry can help us extend our own contributions by relying on and participating in frameworks and structures that are already established.

~ Kat Turner