



RICHMOND HILL UNITED CHURCH
2020 Annual Report

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Mission Statement

We are an inclusive community of Christian people who seek to live faithfully. In response to God's deep and caring love, we strive to offer that love to others, locally and throughout creation.

In order to become this kind of community, we will:

- Gather to hear God's word, learn about God's purpose and offer our worship
- Offer to God and share with God's people the gifts we have, including our time, talents and abilities, our money and building, our compassion and caring
 - Encourage all our members to share in the privileges and responsibilities of church life
- Actively work to support one another in times of struggle or pain, to rejoice with each other in times of celebration and to sustain and develop our fellowship
 - Welcome new members into our church and invite others to share our faith life
- Struggle to understand the needs of our local community and to respond in appropriate and significant ways
 - Share ministry with Canada's people and people of the world

May God bless all that we offer for the benefit of all God's people. Amen

Affirming Ministry Statement

We are proud to declare that Richmond Hill United Church is an affirming ministry, celebrating diversity and committed to the inclusion of, and justice for, all people, regardless of race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, economic circumstance, or any other difference that has led to exclusion, marginalization, or oppression within the church or society. In response to God's deep and caring love, as expressed in the teachings of Jesus, we strive to offer that love to others.

We welcome, invite, and affirm all people as full participants in every aspect of the life of the congregation.

As an affirming ministry, we declare publicly our intention to create a safe space within which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their families and friends will celebrate life passages and share in church membership, leadership and mission.

Vision Statement

As a diverse, vibrant, active and caring Christian community,
we are seeking to respond faithfully to a changing world
and to our own faith community needs.
We are challenged to live our faith every day,
in all aspects of our lives, not just on Sunday morning.
From a congregational day away some years ago, a vision statement
was developed from our mission statement.
We have been striving to live this vision
in three distinct and related areas:

God and Christ Centered
Focusing Spiritually
Worshipping together
Exploring spiritual gifts

Community Centered
Caring and Sharing
Reaching out to one another
Communicating our activities
Supporting the church financially

Beyond Ourselves
Ministering to the World
Building community ties
Responding to global issues

Let us continue to live our vision
as each new day unfolds,
and new ministry challenges lie before us.

Board Officers

Chair: Jane Wedlock
Secretary: Carolyn Balant
Treasurer: D.J. McCready and Larry Little

Statistics from 2020

Baptisms (Adults): 3
Profession of Faith: 1
Baptisms (Children): 4
Marriages: 1
Members Removed by Death: 4

Chair of Board

In a year like no other, I begin my second annual report as Chair of the Board with an expression of deep gratitude for the life and work of this faith community. 2020 will be remembered as a time of great hardship, loss and separation due to COVID-19, but also of surprises, and of unexpected gifts and learning. In the midst of the pandemic we lost some long-time members and others moved away. But new friends were made and old friends who live at a distance could rejoin us in ways we never expected due to our on-line presence. There has been surprising joy amidst the sense of loss.

The Board decided that our Annual Report this year would be framed in a different way – reflecting our Mission Action Plan (MAP) that we agreed to as a congregation in April 2018. The primary focus for our ministry and mission are the following goals:

- To radically create a sense of belonging
- Reach out to our neighbourhood
- Redesign and upgrade our buildings, finances and structures to reflect our vision/mission

We also identified 9 Intentions to guide our efforts and this is the frame for our report in this unprecedented year of 2020. We have sometimes struggled to integrate many of our activities that we have been involved in for years. We hope this report will show the relationship between them

Our Intentions are to:

1. Be a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity
2. Engage with the community in our neighbourhood
3. Ensure our facilities align with our values, identity and purpose
4. Develop intentional opportunities for people to gather to build relationships, nourish spiritual wellness and engage in justice
5. Create dynamic, engaging and meaningful worship
6. Reach out with care to people at all stages of life
7. Communicate our story both within and beyond the congregation
8. Be good stewards of our finances and our facilities
9. Foster and value leaders and volunteers

Change, as we know, is hard – but somehow in this unprecedented time of a global pandemic when our world has been turned upside down, it seems appropriate to look in a slightly different way at all that has been accomplished this year – most of it at a distance from one another. We wanted to try and capture the stories of our faith community in action – and how we are contributing to the intentions/goals that we set ourselves after our congregational circle process in 2017/2018. Our challenge has been to not just keep doing what we have always done but to use these 9 Mission Action Plan Intentions to guide our collective efforts. Even though so much of our “normal” way of being church has been challenged by the restrictions of the pandemic, you can see that once we adjusted to our new reality, much has been accomplished. Even if we weren’t thinking about these intentions, and our new governance structure somewhat in flux, it is possible to frame the story of RHUC in 2020 in this context. It’s not exact – many activities/reports fit into more than one of our intentions.

What has been achieved in spite of COVID demonstrates how we have adapted and continue to live our faith in new, vibrant and perhaps surprising ways. It invites us to consider what we have learned – what innovations we need to continue and what we have clung to in the past that this year has shown us we can let go of.

Even as we might desperately want to return to the way things were, perhaps we know in our hearts that going forward means continuing to do things in new ways, learning from this unprecedented time, embracing new opportunities/challenges that may take us into uncharted waters...listening to the Spirit...travelling together even as we continue to be physically apart.

I would like to express my deep thanks to:

- James and the rest of our staff Barry, Deb, Dan, Paulette and Julia and who have worked hard to help us adapt, innovate and keep us connected during this most difficult of times.
- Members of the Board who have offered companionship and leadership through this challenging time. We have been a small board as regrettably not all positions were filled last year. There was no summer break and there were extra emergency board meetings and online congregational updates to keep everyone connected to what was happening. We also added Mission Action Business Plan meetings to the Board's schedule due to changes in members of the MABP team. Special thanks to DJ McCready who extended his term as Treasurer and to Jane Ridout who navigated the complex and ever-changing world of federal government subsidies in addition to all her other contributions through the Finance Committee.; Carolyn Balant who is completing her three-year term as Secretary. Other valued members of the Board include David Leyton Brown (Chair of Ministry and Personnel) and June Blanchette (United Church Women President).
- Members of the COVID Transition Team who have shared expertise regarding protocols and advice to help us be prepared to gather again in person when it is safe to do so.
- Those who stepped up with technological skills to help us move to on-line Worship that has continued to nurture us each week.
- To committee chairs and other leaders of groups in our congregation who adjusted to the new reality and found ways to keep people connected and engaged and welcomed new people into our midst.
- Members and friends of RHUC who as individuals or groups took initiative to reach out to neighbours and others in the community to offer support and care in these challenging times.

Thank you one and all.

Jane Wedlock, Chair

Minister's Report



How do you put into words what this year has been, each of us affected by a pandemic that gripped the world shortly after our last AGM? As stay-at-home orders went into effect a year ago I wondered how we would “radically create a sense of belonging”, “reach out to our neighbourhood” and “redesign and upgrade our buildings, finances and structures to reflect our vision/mission”. Our normally busy building has been silent apart from a brief period when we reopened for renters, and the sanctuary turned into a studio of sorts with our anticipated opening for a hybrid service on hold since infection numbers started to climb again. And

yet even though we have not been able to do what we normally do, at least in the ways we are used to, we adapted and did what we can given the circumstances.

With this, I would like to take a moment to thank the rest of the ministry team: Deb who has managed to keep the office going from a distance, putting up with my constant phone calls and emails, reaching out to renters and other groups to maintain good communication, adding video production to her skillset; Dan who has worked tirelessly keeping our buildings safe and cared for, freshening up the rooms and hallway with a fresh coat of paint, being on hand when the Krasman Centre Drop-by program set up in the gym; Barry who has been missing the sanctuary (especially the organ) but who found ways to contribute new music for the services and offered me support as we adapted to virtual worship (not easy for such an analogue person); Paulette who has come in to building on Sundays to clean (and feed me with a fried plantain or two); and Julia who joined the ministry team as a student and has had to learn ministry skills via Zoom. It has not been easy on any of us, needing to do our work in isolation when we're used to connecting with one another as a team. But we've all had to adapt, even preparing to meet online for the AGM.

This highlights how much this year has stretched so many of us, me included, in terms of needed new skills. The following tasks were not things I learned how to do in seminary:

- Preaching to a camera and leading worship via Zoom (plus always trusting your tech crew);
- Editing recordings from past services in order to isolate a particular song or hymn;
- Creating “movies” by combining different video clips together;
- Facilitating meetings of various sizes and purposes via so many different online platforms;
- Meeting as a youth group over Zoom to play “online games”;
- Using social media as a way to do social activism as well as reach out to potential new members.

Even as I've had to put these new skills to use as I primarily work from home, I am thankful that so few of us at RHUC have been without support. I'm moved by the way everyone pulled together, be it using all of the technical options that have helped us to carry on or turning to old-school methods like “phone trees” that had fallen out of use over the years. Phone calls were a lifeline to many, and I felt touched by the response of people when I called. I was also touched by how many people stepped forward to help, be it dropping off a sermon or newsletter, picking up supplies for someone, or donating grocery cards to help our neighbours in distress. I am also grateful for having Julia Ye as a student minister with us this year. Knowing that she was reaching out to offer support when I wasn't able to was a real comfort to me.

I am grateful to the members of the Transition Team who came together week after week in order to develop protocols both for ourselves when we hoped to reopen, and our various partners and renters when they returned briefly. I continue to be amazed as I look back on the wisdom and expertise of this important group. The plans that were developed will be implemented once infection rates go back down and the AV improvements they recommended will benefit our long-term ministry in the years to come.

But in the short-term, as weeks became months, it was clear we'd have to keep doing the regular work of a community of faith. Over this time, I led worship and preached (albeit on Zoom), created resources for parents to nurture their children's faith at home, took part in study and spirituality groups as they moved online, led "Faith Exploration" classes in preparation for baptism and confirmation (three adults and one older child this past Fall plus two adults this coming Spring), prepared parents for baptism of their children, conducted funerals and a wedding, and worked with various partners like Neighbours for the Planet and CAYR in online events like "Jubilee: New Hope for Our Planet" to celebrate the Season of Creation and a gathering to mark the Trans Day of Remembrance. These are some of the ways I've worked on our goals to "radically create a sense of belonging" and to "reach out to our neighbourhood".

Another significant way we have done this is in response to the death of George Floyd and the too-long overlooked reality of anti-Black racism in our world. I knew we needed to do more than post pics of our "Black Lives Matter" signs on Instagram or highlight systemic racism in preaching and prayers. With the blessing of our Board this winter we established a Racism Awareness Working Group in order to discern the depth of this injustice not just in the community but in our congregation. A big thank you to Julia for heading up this important work.

Another priority for us is to "redesign and upgrade our buildings, finances and structures" and this has not been forgotten. While it has been more difficult to imagine our aim to be a "Centre for Community and the Arts" with activities like the intercultural concert series put on hold and other events moved online, we do continue to move ahead.

Through the year, I continued to nurture relationships with possible partners like CAYR, Richmond Hill Group of Artists and Neighbours for the Planet, and offered support to Jane Wedlock, the rest of the Mission Action Business Plan Committee, and SHS Consulting as we work toward our long-term goal of redeveloping the CD Building, now called the "Village Commons".

As I reflect back on this year, it is amazing to see how much we have accomplished during a pandemic. There have been challenges, but also surprising opportunities as we have worked on our primary goals. In addition, we have kept our nine specific intentions before us and I invite you to look at my "Minister's Messages" through Lent and the first half of Easter for a sense of how we have done. Opportunities for ministry are always before us as we respond with Christ's loving compassion and call for justice. Without a doubt, this year was certainly no exception.

Reverend James Ravenscroft

Director of Music



As you all know, this past year has posed a unique challenge to all of us and from my own personal perspective, one of artistic and musical loneliness, primarily due to the unavoidable cancellation of rehearsals with our beloved Chancel Choir and in-person Sunday morning worship. We were virtually a month and a half away from what promised to be an outstanding spring concert featuring a program of Celtic music from Ireland, Scotland and, of course, Nova Scotia, along with a wonderful Irish Celtic ensemble. But

don't dismay: plans are to present this program in the spring of 2022. What a great way to celebrate 31 years of music ministry at RHUC – actually, the longest-serving Music Director at our church ever!

I've been very fortunate to have many willing and able choristers happily agree to record solos and duets for upcoming on-line services. Luckily, we were also able to hold several choir rehearsals with a small group of singers (following Covid-19 protocols with masks and social distancing) in June, September, and November to record hymns and anthems. I am eternally grateful to James for the extraordinary work involved in retrieving anthems and hymns from recordings of previous services due to my incompetence with technical matters. I long for the day when we can all be together in the near future and touch hearts with beautiful music once again. From a lonely musical heart.

Sincerely, Barry Peters

Ministry Intern

I look back at the past seven months of my internship in RHUC and think “What a meaningful learning journey!” Regardless of the pandemic lockdown, I have been able to take the opportunity to get to know people and do the things I never imagined I could do. In the first three months, my main activity was making phone calls. Taking the opportunity that the church needs to update the database, I phoned every person and family in the church directory through the months. I asked people to send in their recent photos, but the main reason I called is to talk to the people who are part of my lovely congregation, to get to know them a little more, to offer support and care in this challenging time. I feel fulfilled getting to know more people and families within a half year than in a decade. The conversations were delightful and mutually blessed.



Every Monday morning, I had a supervision session with James (a total of 27 sessions through the term). It was one of the highlights of my internship experience. Like a sponge, I have so much to learn and absorb, from theology to practice in ministry, from church leadership to congregational concerns, from United Church history and polity to my spiritual maturity as a Christian training to be in full-time ministry. In addition, every Sunday I came to the sanctuary in person to learn more about leading worship. Sometimes I played a role in the worship service (e.g., prayers).

In Lent, I led the prayer of confession every Sunday and joined James in leading the four services in Holy week. With James' help, I have preached twice. Though preaching is still my growing edge, I'm glad I did it. In March, I had an opportunity to assist James in leading a funeral service.

Another main project that I did in the internship is to form and facilitate the Racism Awareness Working Group. It's a joy and privilege to work with our diverse group members – white, Caribbean and Asian. I held one workshop and facilitated another six sessions that mainly were story-sharing and discussion. Besides the material of racial justice from the UCC's website, I have connected with a few minority ethnic ministers (Korean and Chinese) in this region through James. They provided me with some information about anti-racism work and intercultural ministry. Because intercultural development is my focus in ministry, I will continue connecting with ministers/pastors who are involved in intercultural congregations.

The experience of internship has greatly enriched me and helped me to grow. Theologically, my view has been broadened. Seeing the gospel as collective good news, I am able to have a more holistic view of ministry: not just the offer of grace to individuals, but the primary focus being the formation of community. I have never felt so strongly the importance of togetherness, being in community and building relationships. Working with the wonderful ministry team and lay leaders, I had their support and encouragement, gentle reminders and valuable suggestions. As I played a role in leading worship (e.g., prayers and preaching), I began to understand the essential importance of the Word and the Spirit. Through both, I am able to grasp the meaning of the text in its context, develop the main theology, discern the needs of our congregation, and consider how to apply it to our lives. The task of facilitating group discussion has given me an opportunity both to serve and to lead. I am learning to create an open, safe and inclusive environment, helping the group to build relationships and to practise shared leadership. During the internship, I also attended board meetings and a few worship committee meetings. They helped me get a sense of how the church gets going under the leadership team, and how worship is both planned and made better in the future. In Lent, I attended the book study to help me understand more deeply the issue of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism.

I also enjoyed the UCW meetings and faith exploration sessions as I learned to assist in ministry. One of the important aspects I learned in practicing ministry is self-care. I tried to establish my own work rhythm and kept a daily prayer; asked my support group to give me regular feedback; in time of questioning and doubt, I sought spiritual direction from James who supported me and could hold me accountable. All my personal and professional, theological and spiritual growth couldn't happen without the loving community, who have shaped me and richly blessed me in many ways. I want to thank all of you for your many encouraging words, insights, genuine care and help. Overall, I have learned that as I am serving in ministry, I am being ministered to as well.

As I share my experience of internship with you, I think of our forerunners who have gone before us, who had worshipped in this church and set examples to serve God as they served their neighbours. We are standing on the shoulders of giants. We have had many wonderful leaders from this church who have inspired us in our time. I'm convinced that God is not only looking for professionals. If I wait until I am qualified, or I am in a perfect state to serve (without any issue or struggle), most likely I will never be able to serve. Thank God who "understands the motive behind every thought." (1Chr. 28:9). When you are called to "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (Frederick Buechner), what you need to do is to say "yes" with a willing heart. That is our call, making it such good news that a number of our friends have chosen to serve on the finance committee and in the various clusters. We need to recall that strong lay leadership is our tradition and strength, possible because we always have a loving and very supportive congregation. It is the people that are worth our time and energy. We want to journey alongside them wherever God calls us to serve.

As my internship ends, I encourage you to look at the neighbourhood. Our congregation exists in a very culturally diverse community. One role for us as a church is to see how we can help our city to be a cohesive community, modelling to the wider society how to connect people with each other and to learn from each other. If becoming an intercultural church is our destiny, it is not just to survive, but to live out the vision of an inclusive, accepting God. Together, let us move toward this vision.

Julia Ye

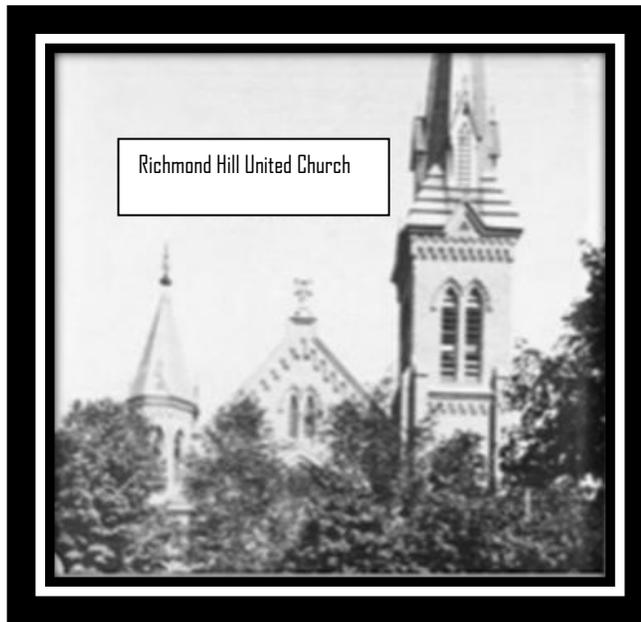
Shining Waters Regional Council

RHUC is one of the communities of faith in Shining Waters Region of the United Church of Canada. During the COVID pandemic, the most visible activities of the Region have been devoted to supporting clergy, lay leaders and communities of faith through the unprecedented challenges.

Nevertheless, other important activities were also undertaken. At the (virtual) meeting of Shining Waters Regional Council in the fall, an equity action plan was approved, and an Intercultural Diversity Commission was created. The Regional Council executive has been working to develop an alternative to the traditional practice of selling church properties (from closed congregations), in order to produce sustainable ongoing revenue.

RHUC's representatives to Shining Waters Regional Council have played significant roles – James Ravenscroft is a member of the Pastoral Relations Commission, Harry Ramsaran is a member of the Communities of Faith Commission, and David Leyton-Brown is the President.

David Leyton-Brown



Mission Action Plan Intentions

1 - Be a Culture of Welcome, Respect and Safety Where We Honour One Another and Respect Diversity

Affirming Ministry Vision Keepers

The following report contributed to the Mission Action Plan in the following ways:

1. Be a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity.
2. Engage with the community in our neighbourhood.
3. Ensure our facilities align with our values, identity and purpose.
4. Develop intentional opportunities for people to gather to build relationships, nourish spiritual wellness and engage in justice.
6. Reach out with care to people at all stages of life.
7. Communicate our story both within and beyond the congregation.

Committee Members: Susan Greene Larry Little DJ McCready Dianne McLeod Doug Loweth
Brian Moore Donna Smith, Coordinator James Ravenscroft, Minister Support



Vision Keepers was established as one item in the Affirming Ministry Action Plan which was approved by the congregation on April 28, 2013. That meeting was called by Council to receive the report of the Steering Committee for this new initiative and to vote on RHUC becoming an Affirming Ministry; ballots were cast, with 94% in favour.

After the January meeting, our usual bi-monthly meetings, except July and August, were held virtually when needed, via Zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But this does not mean our work was curtailed and we continued to keep in touch and carried out the programs and answer the needs of people as we continued to implement the work of being an Affirming Ministry.

We were very thankful that before the pandemic lock-down and disrupted international air travel, our refugee from the Chechnya Russian Republic arrived at Pearson airport on February 6; Lyn May and Donna Smith attended with others from the Sponsoring Group to meet and greet Ashrf – what an emotional and celebratory time to experience. RHUC acted as the documentation sponsor, working with the United Church of Canada and Rainbow Railroad, an organization which works to bring people in the LGBTQ community from countries where they are living with violence, torture, and being imprisoned. Islington United Church has taken on the financial commitment and caring support of Ashrf and he is doing well.

We continue the partnership with CAYR Community Connections, with committee members serving on their Board and working on events, all impacted by the pandemic, but still a vital organization for care and support.

There is now a large heart painted in the Pride colours, outside on the front of the sanctuary, identifying that all people, including LGBTQ people, are welcome.



Thornhill United Church has started the process of becoming an Affirming Ministry and asked if we would share our experience. On July 8, James and Donna attended their meeting on Zoom with Donna outlining our process and James sharing a wealth of knowledge from his experiences with other churches and organizations.

Events held in 2020 (of course, greatly modified because of the pandemic):

PIE Day: We had planned a Lunch and Learn for after the service on Sunday March 15, but this had to be canceled because that was the first day that in-person worship was not held at RHUC for the rest of the year. We will bring the plans made forward to next year and have a lunch of savory and sweet pies and learn more about being a Public Intentional and Explicit people of faith.

PRIDE month in June meant no in-person events but York Region Pride held several events on Zoom. On Sunday, June 14th during worship there was a virtual recognition of our seven-year anniversary as an Affirming Ministry.

WORLD AIDS DAY on December 1st we did have an evening gathering on the sanctuary Yonge Street steps with liturgy, personal stories and candle-lighting. This was held in conjunction with CAYR Community Connections and the opening of their new office in Newmarket. Two people joined us from the community, having seen a notice in social media, and having it streamed live meant that others, who could not attend, could still be part of this commemoration.

People also participated in virtual events presented by CAYR, such as Transgender Day of Remembrance, Love is Love, and Affirm United's National Fruitcake Day; two organizations for learning and support of the gay community.

This has been a very different year for everyone in the world! But as reality set in, people were innovative and committed to learning, caring and supporting those we work to support, as Christ would, in loving everyone as loved and created by God.

Donna Smith, Coordinator

Living in Right Relations

The *Living in Right Relations Committee's (LIRR)* mandate is to nurture relationships of mutual respect and care between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people in our local area. We work through this mandate in three (3) key areas; reconciliation, education and advocacy.

Despite the departure of some of our key team members either to focus on other passions or move residences, the *Living in Right Relations Committee* members of our smaller group have forged on and met the intentions of our Congregational Mission Action Plan (MAP);

1. Be a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity.

Rev. James Ravenscroft continues to include the Land Acknowledgement at the beginning of each service (often including a First Nations greeting).

Sunday, Jan. 18, 2020 LIRR hosted a visit by John Currie, Executive Director of Ontario Rotary's Honouring Indigenous People (HIP) Charity. John shared his journey as a Rotarian and his work with HIP (in the sermon), met with the Teen Seekers upstairs and stayed afterwards for a Lunch and Learn event. RHUC contributed to the work of this charity this year through Advent Giving.

2. Engage with the community in our neighbourhood

Members of our smaller group have been part of the **Richmond Hill's Pathways Toward Reconciliation** group. This group meets monthly (via Zoom) with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in York Region. The mandate of this group is as follows; "We are a community group dedicated to reconciliation with the Indigenous community through listening, learning and building cross-cultural relationships." The group also created a Book Club where we've learned through 'hearing' the stories of Indigenous peoples. Our first gathering took place in October, 2020.

3. Ensure our facilities align with our values, identity and purpose

Members of LIRR have shared that RHUC is available for use by York Region's Indigenous peoples through **York Region's Gathering Voices Committee** and **Richmond Hill's Pathways Toward Reconciliation Group**.

7. Communicate our story both within and beyond the congregation

Members of our group continue to nurture the relationship with Dennis Franklin Cromarty (DFC) High School in Thunder Bay. Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School is an Indigenous school "administered by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC). It was established in 2000 and serves 20 communities around Northwestern Ontario..." of which many are fly-in.

RHUC and friends continue to be allies with DFC sending:

- 170 handmade Valentines to DFC students and staff via courier early February 2020
- two skids of requested and needed items (including winter coats) were collected at RHUC and shipped October 2020. HIP covered the cost of shipping.

A recent update from the school advised "the big Fall 2020 shipment is in the gym awaiting the students' return".



9. Foster and Value Leaders and Volunteers

Ministerial staff and members of RHUC value, encourage and engage those interested in pursuing interests and causes that reflect our Mission Action Plan. Despite a busy schedule, Rev. James Ravenscroft continues to support congregants in their area of interests.

Some youth members have gone on to be engaged and have become allies for Indigenous issues in post-secondary school education and interests. The Committee looks forward to where 2021 takes us and welcome ideas to continue engaging in a meaningful way.

My personal 2020 reflection: What has engaged, sustained and contributed to my well-being in this past year has in large part been my connection with RHUC. This has everything to do with the friendships and connections, and surprisingly, nothing to do with the building itself. That being said, I realize if these relationships hadn't had the opportunity to be nurtured in-person initially, who knows? RHUC's connections to the community are deep and varied; the theatre(s), library, food bank, mental health centres, 360 kids, CHAT's...there's much to be proud of. I feel truly blessed.

Tracy Wixon

2 - Engage with Community in Our Neighbourhood

Home on the Hill and Krasman Centre “Drop-By”

We were very pleased to be able to welcome Home on the Hill as our community partner renting the manse beginning in October. We had hoped it would be earlier but various obstacles needed to be overcome. This note from was included in RHUC Reflections.

“Our gratitude towards the people of the Richmond Hill United Church for providing the Manse as a space for our supportive program is immeasurable. Your kind action enables Home on the Hill to realize its dream of providing a home to individuals with severe and persistent mental illness which will include a cooking program, recreational services and an art program to keep tenants meaningfully engaged and well. Our first tenant was about to become homeless and desperately needs ongoing medical care which we will monitor. We could not have opened this supportive housing opportunity without you and for that, we are eternally thankful.” Kathy Mochnaki, President of the Board of Directors of Home on the Hill

RHUC was also able to provide facilities for Krasman’s “Drop-By” which provides services (peer support, meals and snacks, toiletries, showers and wellness items and naloxone kits) for people living outside or precariously housed who have been severely impacted during the pandemic.

Krasman Centre is grateful for the opportunity to use Richmond Hill United Church's facilities to operate our Peer Support Drop-By Program, where we can continue the work we have been doing to support those most vulnerable in our community, since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. RHUC has been a respected friend and community partner of Krasman Centre and the people we support for many, many years. We are pleased to be able to continue to nurture this mutually supportive relationship through this partnership, as we demonstrate our shared values and a shared vision of communities where no one is 'left behind'. Krasman Centre's Drop-by program at Richmond Hill United Church is allowing those most vulnerable in our community, to continue to access Peer Support, prepared meals, non-perishable food, reusable masks, clothing, personal hygiene items, harm reduction resources, and referrals to the wider range of social services and resources available in York Region, with all infection prevention and control measures in place. We have to stay physically distant, but we are still able to maintain social connection! On behalf of Krasman Centre and the people we support - we sincerely thank you.” Susan Dobson, Executive Director

Breakfast Club Program

The Breakfast Club Program at Walter Scott P.S. and Sixteenth Ave., P.S. provided breakfast Monday to Friday from January to mid-March. To keep the volunteers, students and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to have non-perishable food items purchased and handed out by school staff as needed, instead of volunteers coming in to prepare breakfast.

Thank you to the dedicated volunteers who continue to support this much needed program.

Deb Fratin

3 - Ensure our facilities align with our values, identity and purpose

Mission Action Business Plan 2020

At last year's AGM the congregation approved the following motion:

That Richmond Hill United Church approve moving forward with a long-term plan to

- Demolish and redevelop the CD Building to the congregation's vision, and
- Launch a process to secure and enter into financial and development partnerships by the end of 2020.

The congregation also agreed to the re-branding of the CD building as the Village Commons.

As we know – our plans for 2020 were disrupted by the pandemic and have delayed our progress. However, the work did not stop although timelines have been altered.

We continued our work with SHS Consulting and from the beginning of COVID-19 have had to re-assess the work plan timelines. Our intention this year was to develop a Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for potential development partners and hopefully identify partner(s). This was delayed. SHS engaged consultants on our behalf (prepare a request for quotation, evaluation and coordination) to conduct a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (Phase 2 was not needed) and a Site Survey (boundary and topographical). These were completed and reports submitted to RHUC.

On December 4, 2020, SHS and RHUC hosted a 2-hour on-line Design Workshop with 15 community partners who are interested in potentially sharing space in RHUC's Centre for Community and the Arts – our long-term re-development vision for the former CD building. The purpose of the session was to assess levels of interest and determine the types of spaces that would be needed. This would complement RHUC's own space requirements in a re-developed facility. There was much enthusiasm and synergy amongst the groups. Some groups were unable to attend, and additional follow-up is needed. This information will also be incorporated into the REOI. Preliminary conversations have taken place with the City of Richmond Hill planning department.

In August 2020 we said goodbye to Wendy and Don Thomson who were valued members of our Mission Action Business Plan Team as they moved away from Richmond Hill. It was decided that the MABP team and RHUC Board would meet together with SHS during the year to ensure that we had appropriate conversations and input into discussions.

Special thanks to all at RHUC who continue to support this journey with its many steps. And particularly to Christine Pacini and Mylène Vincent from SHS Consulting who have guided our efforts on this re-development initiative. Their expertise, patience and kindness has moved us forward and we would not have been able to progress to the point where we are without them.

Mission Action Business Plan/Board Team: Jane Wedlock (Chair), Jane Ridout, Nancy Hart, Bill Warwick, Wendy Thomson, Don Thomson, Carolyn Balant, David Leyton-Brown, June Blanchette, DJ McCready, Rev. James Ravenscroft

Jane Wedlock

4 - Develop Intentional Opportunities for People to gather to build relationships, nourish spiritual wellness and engage in justice

Phone Tree

On Saturday, March 14, 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic threatening, phone calls were made by James to two of our members who are doctors and to his colleagues, and the decision was made to close RHUC for Sunday worship on Sunday, March 15th.

An email was sent out; a post put on Facebook and phone calls were made to those we knew did not have computer access. Our concern to keep in touch with all people of the church was evident and several people took lists and phoned people over the next couple weeks; we wanted to identify anyone who needed support to cope during the provincial lockdown and to also express our concern that everyone stay safe and well and connected.

Doug Loweth took all the information received from the phone calls and organized it on a spread sheet, which became a valuable resource. A group volunteered to run errands and do grocery shopping for people. Nicole Moore, Penny Fabbro and Donna Smith worked on the creation of a Phone Tree, with everyone listed in one of the sixteen "branches" of the Tree; sixteen people readily volunteered to be Branch Leaders.

Some people needed a weekly check-in call, every couple of weeks or, if desired, less often. Several people print the weekly Reflections newsletter and the Sunday sermon to be delivered or mailed to those without computers. December arrived and to our surprise, the pandemic was into its second wave! In March we were assuming that all would be well in about a month! The above supports are still being used and will continue throughout and until the pandemic ceases to keep us from in person worship and church committees, study and fellowship groups.

RHUC is a Caring, Community, Church, meeting the needs of those in our faith community.

Donna Smith

H.A.I.R. (Heretics, Agnostics, Infidels and Other Riffraff)

Our Monday evening study group, H.A.I.R. (Heretics, Agnostics, Infidels and Other Riffraff), has continued to meet during the pandemic over Zoom. This group intends to be a place of inquiry and questioning, where doubts are expressed, uncertainties about our faith and its relevance to our daily lives are clarified, and the application of the teachings and principles of our Christian faith to major issues of our time are explored, and where we have interesting and stimulating discussions.

This year we have used videos of TED talks to launch discussion and have dealt with such topics as environmentalism, racism, social justice, ethics, science and religion, and healthy ageing. We have a committed core group, but these discussions are open to anyone interested, and new members are always welcome.

David Leyton-Brown

United Church Women

President: June Blanchette
Recording Secretary: Gloria McCavery
Morning Unit Secretary: Joan Jensen
Kitchen Supply: Stella Creasor

Treasurer: Lynn Townsend
Corresponding Secretary: Marg Moon
Bereavement: Madeline Johnston
Convenor: Dorothy Low

The purpose of the United Church Women is to unite the women of the congregation for the total mission of the Church and to provide a means through which we may express our loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ in Christian witness, study, fellowship and service.



2020 has been a difficult year for everyone. When we met in March at Lynne Saul’s home, we never expected that our next gathering would be in September when we met in Madeline Johnston’s garden and garage. Due to the lockdown, all of our fundraising plans and our annual bus trip had to be put on hold.

In November we said “so long” to Madeline when she moved to Kirkfield to be closer to her family. Thanks to Zoom we are still able to connect with her on Sunday mornings for service. In December, we held our first Zoom meeting, and it was such a success that we will continue in the new year.

We would like to thank everyone for their continued support, and we look forward to the time when we can gather together in the future.

June Blanchette, President

Men's Breakfast

Richmond Hill United Church Men's Breakfast met in person in January and via Zoom in November in 2020. Covid-19 restrictions have caused us to stop in-person breakfasts and speakers. When speakers are available and comfortable to present remotely, the Zoom platform will be used. Attendance is generally comprised of members of the congregation and the wider community, consisting of approximately 20-25 men. The United Church Women and Dan Plourde, our custodian, enthusiastically prepared the breakfast in January.

Our Speaker in January was Bri-Anne Swan (DLM) of the Living Presence Ministry. In November, David Leyton-Brown and his Political Scientist Colleagues from York University conducted a "round table" discussion on the U.S. election.

The group does intend to resume sharing in-person breakfast and speakers when restrictions are lifted. For additional information please contact the following: Wilhelm Bleek (wbleek@sympatico.ca; 905.883.9346) or David Leyton-Brown (dlbrown@yorku.ca 905 884 8861) or Harry Ramsaran (harrypersad.ramsaran@gmail.com; 905.508.4758).

Harry Ramsaran

Shalom Seekers

Shalom Seekers is the longest-running study group at RHUC. The group meets weekly on Monday mornings to talk about issues of faith, other religions and the state of the world, and so much more. We base our discussions on books, videos, and other resources. New members are welcome to join us at any time.

The year 2020 started out in a totally normal fashion until things changed in mid-March! We were finishing up a book study in January and February. From time to time, we go on field trips as a group. We were fortunate to see a play together downtown at Soulpepper Theatre in February. The play was called "Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train" by Stephen Adly Guirgis. We had a talk-back session the following Monday to discuss our reactions to and thoughts about this very riveting performance.

At the beginning of March, we had just started a new DVD series called Pro-Future Faith when everything ground to a halt due to the pandemic. We had a few weeks with no meetings, but then on March 30th, we had our first Shalom Zoom meeting to check in with one another.

Since that time, we have been gathering weekly on Zoom and it has been a touchstone and valued part of our week. Rather than continue with programming, we viewed this as a social time to discuss news of the day and see how everyone was doing. Even though we normally take the summer off from our meetings, it was decided that we would continue to meet in July and August. That continuity was important and kept us from feeling too lonely. A silver lining of the pandemic and our pivot to on-line meetings was that Dawn Moon, a long-time Shalom member and valued co-leader, was able to join us from their new home in Kitchener!

In mid-September, we were excited to be able to meet in person again, outdoors at Dora Lamb's garden on Church Street. We did this for several weeks, wearing masks and sitting at a good distance apart with our folding chairs. This was such a treat after months and months of Zoom meetings!

We continued to meet outside at the Town Park in Dora Lamb's old garden while the weather was still nice enough. During the rest of the fall and early winter, we delved into a new book study – *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown Taylor – that took us to our usual break in mid-December.

We look forward to the day when we will be able to meet in person again, but until then, we are most grateful to have the opportunity to stay connected via Zoom. Shalom.

Sandra Loughton & Peg Hiscoke, Co-Facilitators

Women's Spirituality

The following report contributed to the Mission Action Plan as follows:

- #1 Be a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity.
- #4 Develop intentional opportunities for people to gather to build relationships, nourish spiritual wellness and engage in justice.
- #6 Reach out with care to people at all stages of life.



RHUC's Women's Spirituality is a group of women who gather the second Saturday of the month, September to June. We start at 9:45 with light refreshments and a time of visiting with each other. The theme presentation starts at 10:15 and we end our gatherings at 12:00. We have been meeting since November 2001; our first "incarnation" of a similar group for women was called "Women of the Spirit, Seekers of Light" from January 1994 to May 1996.

After our regular meetings January – March, COVID-19 changed the way we met by dispensing with refreshments due to health protocols and when meeting in person, maintaining social distancing. We held four Zoom meetings, two in the chapel, and three outside - one on the church front lawn and two at other locations; we decided to meet in July and August so contact during this difficult time could be maintained. There are 12 people in our group and there were an average 9 people attending the gatherings. We gathered at Donna Smith's home in January for our post-Christmas social time and in September we met at the Vishnu Mandir at Yonge and Highway 7 for a meditative walk through their Peace Garden and sharing afterward.

Our Tenth Annual Winter Weekend Women's Retreat was held Friday, January 31 at 5:00, till Sunday February 2 at 3:00. There were 8 women from Women's Spirituality attending plus 7 women from the congregation and 1 guest, totaling 16 women, with some staying two nights, some one night and others coming for Saturday only. This get-away together time is held at Loretto Maryholme Retreat Centre, a beautiful old estate home on the shore of Lake Simcoe, just outside of Keswick.

The themes for the weekend were: “Nurturing the Christmas Spirit through the Winter” and “Candlemas”. The 10th Anniversary celebration “banquet” was dinner Saturday with cake, decorated cookies and wearing fascinator hats made from craft supplies!

In 2020, we studied and reflected on many topics, all led by members, including:

- “Gal-entines”
- Story of Esther
- Our Mothers
- In the garden at Amos Wright Heritage Park
- 10 Kisses in the Bible
- 100 Years of Women's Changing Society
- Mary, Mother of Jesus

Other topics included: living with COVID-19, monthly check-ins and three gatherings devoted to listening and supporting each other, with each bringing their spiritual concerns for such a time.

We are women on life's faith and spiritual journey who support and learn from each other. An invitation and a warm welcome await all women to join any or all of our gatherings and activities. They are announced in RHUC Reflections online.

Donna Smith, Coordinator

Hands and Hearts for Africa

Our group of wonderful grandmothers and friends continued to connect RHUC to justice in the global context by our support in 2020 of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. We appreciate the ongoing support of RHUC for African people impacted by AIDS and the congregation's ongoing enthusiasm for our fundraising events. In 2020 we were fortunate to have two events, one live and one virtual.

1. Our live in-person event for families took place on Leap Night (February 29) It was a fun evening of board games and chili dinner. This event was very well received.
2. As in past years, we decided to put together a walking team and challenged ourselves to a long walk up and down Africa's highest mountains, starting with Mount Everest. This Virtual Climb up Africa's mountains was held in the fall of 2020 starting in late October and finishing on World AIDS Day, December 1st.



I would like to thank all the grandmothers and friends who helped with these events. It is their efforts that make our events fun for all those who attend. A big thank you to my co-convenor Donna Harrison and to all of you who attended Leap Night or supported our Virtual Walk. Through our combined efforts we were able to support the Stephen Lewis Foundation programmes in a very challenging year!

Peg Hiscoke and Donna Harrison

Book Club

The RHUC Book Club usually gathers eight months of the year to discuss books of all types – Canadian authors, authors from around the world, fiction and non-fiction. New members are always welcome to join us. The book club acts as an outreach activity as well since some long-time members are not part of our Sunday congregation but are from the Richmond Hill community. The group has been in existence since Reverend Heather Burton established the book club in 2003.

The RHUC Book Club has had an interesting year! We met as usual on the last Wednesday in January 2020 and when the weather was bad on the day of our scheduled meeting night in February, we had to cancel. We met a week later on March 4th to make up for the snowed-out meeting. Little did we know then that this would be our last in-person meeting for the rest of the year!

In March and April, I think a lot of us were in shock and trying to come to grips with what this pandemic meant and we were struggling to figure out how we would continue to lead our lives which now felt anything but normal. At the beginning of the pandemic, many people reported that they couldn't focus or concentrate on books. Slowly, that changed, and people were missing their libraries and running desperately short of reading material. I saw a need and tried to fill it! I have a huge collection of books and I was happy to share with my church book club friends and beyond. I started what I jokingly called "Sandra's Pandemic Lending Library". I would gather five or six books that I thought the person would enjoy and would head out to drop them off in a Covid-friendly manner – mask, gloves, and books in a bag that could be left to quarantine for a few days in the person's front hallway. It was a great way to connect with people and share the wealth!

The book club didn't meet at the end of March. In April and May, we met on this new-to-us platform called Zoom, and the rest is history. For those first two months we connected on Zoom to talk about how things were going and to see if we'd like to try and read books together again as a group and meet on-line in the future for virtual meetings.

We had some sad news in April 2020 when one of our book club and congregation members, Nancy Han, passed away quite suddenly. The book club reached out to Nancy's husband and son upon her death. Of course, due to Covid restrictions, we couldn't attend a visitation or funeral service for Nancy.

Since June 2020, we have been meeting monthly on Zoom to discuss books and check in with each other. Unlike "normal times", we met all through the summer, only taking a break in December. We decided to meet at 4 p.m. in the afternoon instead of at 7 p.m. as we did for our in-person meetings. The group actually grew in size during the pandemic which was an unexpected side-benefit. We have been pleased to welcome Rev. Heather Burton, the founder of the book club, back into the group all the way from Kelowna, BC! Also, we had five other members join us during this strange time of isolation. On the flip-side, we have a few members who haven't felt comfortable joining us on-line, but we look forward to the day when they will be able to take part in our in-person meetings once again. The book club now has 27 active members.

I had a nice card from a member of the book club a few months ago and one line has really stuck with me. She said, "Thank you for keeping us connected through books." And it's true, it is through reading and discussing books that we learn more about our world, ourselves, and others. Stay Calm & Read On!

Sandra Loughton , RHUC Book Club Facilitator

5 -Create Dynamic, Engaging and Meaningful Worship

Worship Committee

James Ravenscroft (Minister), Barry Peters (Music Director), Anne Leyton-Brown (Youth Choir Director), Linda Clark, Anne Dunn, Joan Verner, Dominick Shelton, Carol Moore and Harry Ramsaran (Chair)

When the potential impacts of Covid-19 become clear, the Worship Committee moved quickly to safeguard Sunday morning worship. Sunday morning worship has been conducted via Zoom since March 2020. Our Minister, James Ravenscroft, continues to perform baptism and the receiving new members via Zoom.

Thanks to the congregation members who have willingly responded to the invitation to read the scriptures and conduct the “Prayers of the People” during Sunday morning worship.

Music for worship services has been dependent on finding appropriate hymns, anthems, preludes and postludes from recordings of past services as well as CDs of other choirs, with their permission. Our thanks to Craig Lee and Doug Loweth for their assistance with this undertaking. At times, Barry Peters, our Director of Music, has come to the church to record organ postludes and meditation pieces.

The Worship Committee continues to work in collaboration with our Minister, James Ravenscroft, to ensure Sunday morning worship via Zoom is meeting the congregation’s expectations.

The Worship Committee continues to follow the recommendations of the Transition Team regarding the potential opening of in-person worship.

The Worship committee is indeed grateful for the continued technical support on Sunday Mornings from Brandon Moore, Paula Windsor, Howe Foo, Adam DeVita, Dave Mountain and Glen Warren.

During 2020, we were privileged to have Rev. Evelyn McLachlan and Rev. Linda Butler providing pulpit supply while our Minister, James Ravenscroft, was on vacation.

Harry Ramsaran, Chair of Worship

Boosting our Signal Campaign

See attached report.



6 -Reach out with care to people at all stages of life

Family Ministry



John Lennon once sang, "Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans." That sentiment captures so well what this year has been like for all of us, especially at RHUC when it comes to supporting families, children, youth and young adults. Much of ministry with children and youth is predicated on being together and getting your hands dirty. Last year, we had just shifted elements of Discovery Time, including having regular "All Family" Sundays when children stay in the sanctuary for the whole service. Unfortunately, that approach doesn't translate onto Zoom, so those are on hold until we are back together in the flesh. Similarly, we had plans in the works for games nights and other social activities to support families. They too are on hold as is the annual Advent Craft Dinner.

Yet we found ways to adapt what we regularly do in new ways:

- for the annual youth musical we broadcast "Rescue in the Night"
- our upcoming high school graduates submitted video greetings and we revealed the "Secret Friend" via Zoom, something we will do this year too
- families could pick up Advent crafts they could do at home
- families lit candles for Advent, one family even doing so though separated by an ocean, all thanks to Zoom

And we did a few different things:

- distributed Halloween goody bags as a way to connect with families who are isolating at home
- created "Learning Together" videos and "Discovery Time" activities that can be done at home. (both are posted online as well as sent to families)
- invited parents and children to record readings for a video-based Family Christmas Eve service
- for Good Friday, Youth Choir members submitted recordings of readings based on local and global situations of injustice and pastoral concern

It has been a different year for Family Ministry, but we have been able to adapt. And in the end, isn't that what life is about?

Rev. James Ravenscroft

Youth Ministry - Staying Connected Through Squares: Youth Choir Check-Ins

When the church went on to online worship, we in the youth choir knew we had to keep connected. We all love the community too much not too. The next Sunday, we began meeting on Zoom for half an hour each Sunday afternoon. Each week we begin with a check in. We've discovered how important it is to talk with one another. We have all both mourned the losses of COVID, but also found moments of joy to share. We have supported one another through the hard times and celebrated the victories. And then we talk about anything and everything! Whether it's been getting up at 5 am wearing pajamas to school, honesty during virtual tests, art, music, procrastination, coping with missing friends, all the way to virtual backgrounds of scraped knees, we have discussed it!

Mainly, we are all grateful. Zoom may make us want to throw our computers out the window at times, but it has allowed us to stay connected to a community we all love. It has helped us laugh while missing normalcy. While the need has fluctuated during our time together, we always have life-giving conversations.

Ian Wilgus

Lay Pastoral Visitors (LPV)

Since March 20, 2020, the LPV have continued to connect (by phone or Zoom) with particular members of our congregation who are unable to attend services. Responses to these virtual and telephone visits indicate just how happy these people are to have been acknowledged.

To see the joy in the eyes of the visitees as he/she is given a beautiful begonia at Easter time warms our hearts. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were unable to have our Seniors' Luncheon in Centennial Hall as we had done for many years in the past.

Our LPV team has been instrumental in conducting a monthly church service at the neighbourhood hospital and services in retirement and long-term care homes on a regular basis. This team has been around forever. We will keep Enid Mann and Ann Whittingham in our hearts.

We can hope and pray that a Lay Pastoral Visitors team continues to function at RHUC.

Donna Byres, Donna McErlain

Secret Friends

The following report contributed to the Mission Action Plan by following:

- #6 Reach out with care to people at all stages of life.
- #7 Communicate our story both within and beyond the congregation.

Since September 2003, university and college students of our church, who are in their first year of studying, usually living away from home for the first time, are matched with a volunteer from the congregation. Cards, notes and maybe a small "care" package are mailed throughout the school year to let the students know that their church family is interested in them and that they are in our thoughts and prayers. There is no expectation that the student will respond to these communications, just to receive them, and for secrecy to be kept until their Secret Friend is revealed at a worship service in the Spring.

During this school year, 2020-2021, we have four students with a Secret Friend, and sadly, all are studying virtually at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic: Jenny Huang at University of British Columbia / Isobel McCabe at Sheridan College / Matthew Miller at McMaster University / Sara Perez at York University.

Donna Smith, Coordinator

7- Communicate our story both within and beyond the congregation

Net Zero

In 2020, how have we in the Net Zero Committee contributed to help RHUC meet our commitments?

We have done this 😊 by...

1. Being a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity
2. Engaging with the community in our neighbourhood
3. Ensuring our facilities align with our values, identity and purpose
4. Developing intentional opportunities for people to gather to build relationships, nourish spiritual wellness and engage in justice
7. Communicating our story both within and beyond the congregation
8. Being good stewards of our finances and facilities

The planet is a system, where what happens in one area pulls gently on invisible strings that affect the whole. RHUC is also a system; a happy face or an act of justice, inoculates a little happiness or justice into the whole.

The Net Zero Committee communicates within and beyond the congregation that we engage in justice. From our start in May 2009, our goal has always been to help RHUC reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions and we have worked to reduce waste and conserve energy over the years. But, it became apparent in 2018, with the IPCC report stepping up the timeline on the climate crisis and with a lack of appropriate action to that report, that we also had a role to play in the soul of both RHUC and the wider community. We needed to engage people before change could ever really happen.

Early in 2019, we initiated the Target Climate initiatives, just before both the national government and the City of Toronto declared climate emergencies. Target Climate is about building capacity at a grassroots level by bringing people together to network and share experience and resources and engage with political leaders. The initial meetings in 2019 led to our team being invited to support the City of Richmond Hill as it developed its own climate response - and had a system-effect that was exactly what was hoped-for. A diverse group of people, previously working alone, became hopeful and energized and empowered and are still very active.

Currently, by inviting our community and political leaders into our church, we showed that this place is open and active in justice, that you are welcome and safe and respected here, that we have values, and our facility is striving to align with our values. We created an intentional opportunity for people to gather and build relationships within this building as they engaged in justice. And this had amazing results: we are known and respected, we have been asked to be active in climate planning in the city, Neighbours for the Planet (recently incorporated) was initiated, and RHUC was considered as the locale for a climate hub for the northern GTA.



Target Climate sent a request to other faith communities - asking them to join with us in our endeavours. A management team was created and it met in January, February and then virtually in April and June - planning our next events (including the one below - which had to be cancelled because of the pandemic). The Target Climate model has spread to Willowdale and Newmarket. Systems are being changed by little actions that cost very little financially - we have been good stewards of the finances and facility of RHUC and this building.

At the last AGM, Net Zero placed this request:

Members will be asked to form 'family' groups of at least three people. Each family will be supported as they create a family climate action plan to meet 45% reduction of emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050.

My group has inspired each other to consider food choices and to investigate retrofitting. **We continue to ask you to find ways to meet to build our capacity for climate action.**

We must do better in 2021. RHUC is still far from reaching its net zero goals. We need to recognize the incentives available to use green energy and the much higher cost projected if we continue to use carbon-based fuels. **Net Zero is urging RHUC to access green technology to heat and light this building.** It is an emergency.

Esther Collier

Communications Team

Many of the members of our Communications Team are now supporting our pivot to online Worship because of the pandemic: each week we're prepping the necessary videos and slides, and hosting and filming on Zoom. Understandably, this has been the primary demand of our time and energy over the past year.

To support the intentions of being a culture of welcome and creating dynamic, engaging and meaningful workshop online:

- we introduced a pre-roll video so that new people who discover our worship services online have a better sense of what we do at RHUC
- we streamed our services to Facebook and launched a YouTube channel with recordings of services
- we worked with Deb Fratin, Office Administrator, to refresh our CanadaHelps landing page for online donations
- and we developed instructions to help members of our community of faith participate more effectively online.

We've also been working on three main projects. The first supports our intention of engaging with the community in our neighbourhood by developing the new branding for the Village Commons with the intention of a proper community launch when we can gather again in person.

The second project also supports that intention as we try to develop a new contemporary tagline for RHUC that speaks to who we are in the community.

The third project supports our intention of communicating our story beyond our congregation with a re-design of the website to make it more contemporary, improve navigation, and better serve our needs.

As always, we welcome and encourage people who are interested in this kind of work to join our team!

Howe Foo, Brandon Moore, James Ravenscroft, Glen Warren, Carolyn You

8 -Be Good Stewards of our Finances and Facilities

Generous Spirit



- ❖ Intention 6 - Reach out with care to people at all stages of life
 - This year, an offer was made to pick up completed pledge forms from people's homes, and/or deliver additional copies of the pledge forms to anyone requesting one.
 - So many of our congregation have been impacted by COVID directly or indirectly. There is a clear understanding that pledges may vary at this difficult time based on individual circumstances.
- ❖ Intention 7 - Communicate our story both within and beyond the congregation.
 - Included with the annual Generous Spirit package was a letter sharing information with the congregation of some of the expenditures from the 2020 financial situation of the church and an outline of challenges.
 - RHUC online services have included a Sunday Offering message, outlining various ways donations can be made to the church - all tax deductible.
 - The Generous Spirit Team had messages in the Reflections newsletter during November and December thanking people for their on-going financial contributions, reminding people of the campaign, and thanking those who had submitted their pledges for 2021.
- ❖ Intention 8 - Be good stewards of our finances and facilities.
 - Generous Spirit continued with the annual campaign this year, even though the team was not able to host a congregational gathering with refreshments.
 - The Generous Spirit Team had conversation with RHUC's Finance Team to receive current information prior to the campaign, e.g. loss of income from rentals due to Covid.

Nancy Hart

Mission and Service

The following report contributed to the Mission Action Plan as follows:

- #4 Develop intentional opportunities for people to gather to build relationships, nourish spiritual wellness and engage in justice.
- #8 Be good stewards of our finances and facilities.

The Mission & Service Fund (M&S) of the United Church of Canada has its roots going back to 1925 when the United Church was created by the joining together of three denominations. The interest and dedication of these combined denominations has continued: all people have chosen to follow Jesus and give a portion of their family income to the church and designate a portion to go to the work of assisting others in Canada and the world. Stewardship and giving is a discipline that Christians develop as their faith and spirituality grow through membership, supporting their local church through worship, work, time, talent and money.

All donations for M&S is forwarded to the United Church of Canada and is dispersed to the projects and programs that have been carefully researched. In this way, we are supporting front-line programs which meet criteria and are accountable for working towards mending the world to be just and equal for all people. Every dollar you designate to M&S goes to this work. RHUC met our goal of \$33,500 and actually surpassed it by 3% making the total raised through members and United Church Women fundraising of \$5,000 to \$34,189. Wonderful news to be celebrated!

In these difficult and challenging times with COVID-19, our members have still given to the M&S Fund for others because we are a “caring community church”. Some may not have been able to maintain their givings due to the loss of employment, but it looks like others have been able to give a little bit more – a testament to our level of faithful discipline.

Donna Smith, M&S Enthusiast

Operations Committee

Our Operations Team is part of our new governance model that has been really helpful in identifying day-to-day issues that need to be addressed, ensuring communication and supporting staff. Leadership of the operations team would normally be offered by the Board Vice Chair but in the absence of someone in that position, the Board Chair took on this responsibility in 2020. The team includes James Ravenscroft, Deb Fratin, Dan Plourde and the chairs of M and P (David Leyton-Brown), the Treasurer (DJ McCready) and Chair of Property (Bill Warwick). More recently David Mountain joined us representing a Technology Team that is in development. Operations met monthly during 2020 with the exception of August.

Early in 2020 we continued to have ongoing issues related to the roof of the CD Building (Village Commons). It was challenging to both understand the scope of the issue and a solution. Dan was vigilant in monitoring leaks and patching where he thought it would remedy the situation. The contractor came at the end of June and the roof was finally fixed. RHUC had to absorb the cost, which was not covered by warranty. The 3rd floor gym ceiling has been repaired and painted. This will be helpful in terms of additional revenue. We continue to determine the best way to maximize revenue from space rentals on the 3rd floor.

Once the pandemic started, our concerns were staff safety and logistics in terms of priorities for RHUC and working arrangements for staff. James was the Operations Team liaison with a newly established Transition Team who developed protocols required for being in the building and recommendations for re-opening. We also focused on adjustments to congregational life associated with the ongoing pandemic and regular assessments of how people were doing.

During the lock down, Deb was in contact with all tenants to assess their continued interest in use of space depending on how the pandemic unfolded and what was allowed in terms of returning to RHUC.

With no-one in the building, in addition to regular maintenance, it was possible for Dan to take on painting of rooms that would normally be difficult to access with tenant usage.

An application for a federally funded summer student position to assist with work related to RHUC archives was submitted – but COVID intervened and we were no longer in a position to hire a student.

Early in the year it was determined that a part-time evening custodian position was needed to assist with increased evening rentals. An individual was hired but then the pandemic hit. The position was maintained for a few months but ultimately was not needed due to loss of rentals due to the pandemic.

We took advantage of webinars that were being hosted by Shining Waters Regional Council on a number of topics to assist congregations in navigating these unprecedented times.

In addition, we were able to take advantage of the federal Wage Subsidy and Small Business Loan that was also available for churches.

The manse was cleared for new tenancy and repairs completed including roof. Home on the Hill is our new tenant and are thrilled to have the space for supportive housing and community programming. The tenancy officially began in October.

Roof shingle repairs were also made to the sanctuary.

WiFi access (both wired and wireless) was provided in the sanctuary.

Thanks to Deb Fratin for her kindness and keeping everything on track from an office perspective – maintaining relationships from a distance and being so responsive to questions and concerns.



I would like to give a special recognition to Dan Plourde who has been labouring away during the pandemic in our large building day after day, mostly alone. His commitment to ensuring our facilities are looked after and improved with minimal cost has been enormous. We owe him enormous thanks for all his efforts and for keeping our beloved church safe in these most trying times when we are separated. Thank you Dan!

Jane Wedlock, Board Chair

Trustees

- The Trustees held their annual meeting on April 20, 2021, welcoming Jane Ridout as a new trustee. They reviewed their responsibilities for the past year (2020)
- The Trustees expressed confidence in the work of the Board, Operations Team, Finance Committee, Property Committee and Mission Action Business Plan Committee who capably act in many of the areas the Manual assigns to the oversight of the Trustees.
- The Trustees were updated on the work of the Mission Action Business Plan Committee and SHS Consulting regarding the future demolition and redevelopment of the CD Building (Village Commons), including that an environmental assessment and property survey have both been conducted.
- The trustees also received assurance from the Finance Committee in regard to our present insurance coverage as well as investments.
- There was no other business from 2020 that needed to be reviewed by the Trustees.

The current members of the RHUC Trustees are Stewart Coxford, David Leyton-Brown, Peter May, Harry Ramsaran, Jane Ridout, and Jane Wedlock (ex-officio as Board Chair) and Rev. James Ravenscroft (ex officio as the minister). Their addresses are published in the RHUC directory.

Finance Report

See attached report.

9 - Foster and Value Leaders and Volunteers

Governance Working Group

The Governance Working Group continues our work on MAP Project 9A “Review Governance and Leadership Structure.” We introduced a new model in 2019, and have spent the past two years implementing changes, identifying successes, and exploring areas for further refinement. Four specific components of the project remain front of mind:

1. Ensuring our governance is flexible and permission-giving.
2. Freeing up energy for new projects by letting go of activities or finding efficiencies.
3. Creating space for the development of ad hoc groups that activate ideas that reflect our values and interests.
4. Working on succession planning for leaders.
5. Evaluating the effectiveness of using project teams as a way to move our mission forward.

The creation of the Operations Council (with a suggested name change) remains a success. By having a body focused on the operations of the church, the Church Board has been freed up to focus on strategy and planning.

The launch of the Forums has been hampered by the challenge of finding leadership, and the difficulty in conducting the forums even with interim leadership during the past year when the pandemic has prevented us from gathering in person.

Given our many years of success with Outreach Forums, we still have faith that the format itself can work. Our first Worship, Music & Spiritual Formation Forum (held in May 2019) was the spark that revitalized our Family Ministry Team and began the transformation of Discovery Time. Our Leadership & Congregational Development Forum in January 2020 saw the development of an imaginative idea to gather together our community with the partners who use our space—something that couldn't proceed during the pandemic, but will be a vital step forward in being a Centre for Community when we do come together again in-person. We recently held our third Leadership & Congregational Development Forum in April 2021, and we are thrilled to hear that our Nominations Working Group has successfully found people willing to take on the leadership of bringing these events together.

One recommendation that is enumerated below is that we use new designations for committees and other governance bodies, based on whether they are operational in nature or connected to the ongoing pastoral and spiritual needs of the congregation. This will also support the project component of using teams to move our mission forward.

Our work in the year ahead will be continuing to see through this evolution, and to continue to monitor and measure the success of our implementation. As always, we welcome anyone interested in being part of this work to let us know.

- *Governance Working Group (Joan Jensen, David Leyton-Brown, DJ McCready, Brandon Moore, James Ravenscroft)*

Governing Body: CHURCH BOARD

Responsible for policy development, strategy and planning, and the responsibilities of the judicatory of the community of faith (congregation) as outlined in The Manual, especially in regard to the connection between the community of faith and both Shining Waters Regional Council and the General Council.

The Board as a whole oversees Manual-defined responsibilities of removing people as full members, disciplining of members, granting certificates of transfer of membership (leaving), the use of the church building, pastoral care and visiting, outreach in evangelism and social action, fundraising, pastoral relations matters.

The Finance Committee oversees Manual-defined responsibilities for oversight of finances of the congregation.

Executive

1. Chair (2-year term)
2. Vice-Chair (1-year term, in the Chair's 2nd year of 2)

3. Past-Chair (1-year term, in the Chair’s 1st year of 2)
4. Secretary (3-year term)
5. Minister (ex officio)

Leadership Succession Plan

| 21/22 | 22/23 | 23/24 | 24/25 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Chair: Jane Wedlock | Chair: 21/22 Vice-Chair | Chair: 21/22 Vice-Chair | Chair: 23/24 Vice-Chair |
| Vice-Chair: To be elected at AGM 2021 | Past-Chair: Jane Wedlock | Vice-Chair: To be elected at AGM 2023 | Past-Chair: 21/22 Vice-Chair |

Forum Facilitators (3-year terms, normally maximum of 2 terms)

1. Worship, Music & Spiritual Formation
2. Leadership & Congregational Development
3. Mission, Outreach & Social Justice
 - *Forum Facilitators hold events when the community of faith can come together to discuss policy and strategy, identify ideas and projects, form ad hoc groups to activate ideas.*
 - *Forum Facilitators liaise with ad hoc group leaders to see ideas and projects through to completion.*

Finance Committee Chair (3-year term, normally maximum of 2 terms)

Regional Council Representative (eligible for 3, at least 1 shall attend Board)

UCW President

Ministry & Personnel Committee Chair (3-year term, normally maximum of 2 terms)

Trustees Representative (necessary only if there is no member of the Trustees serving in any other Board role)

Member(s)-at-Large (1-2 individuals, 1-year term, maximum of 2-3 terms)

- *Goal with these positions is to develop leadership by engaging new people in the work of the Board and to bring diversity of perspectives from the community of faith*

OPERATIONS COUNCIL

Responsible for day-to-day operational issues and concerns

Chaired by the **Vice-Chair** or **Past-Chair**

Treasurer (3-year term)

Property Committee Chair

Ministry & Personnel Committee Chair

Technology Working Group Chair

- *This is a new body that we are creating, arising out of needs that we identified during 2020, terms of reference are being developed to clarify what technology/equipment we’re talking about and expectations in regards to areas that have previously fallen under the responsibility of Worship/Finance*

COMMITTEES / TEAMS / WORKING GROUPS

This remains the next major area of focus for us. We need to ensure that we have the committees, teams and working groups that reflect all our needs and our capacities, finding ways for these bodies to be flexible, and ensuring we are fulfilling the requirements of the United Church of Canada Manual and the tasks we have identified in our constitution.

This year, we are exploring using “standardized” terminology to be clear about what these bodies are:

- Committee (bodies that are standing, operational, elected leadership for 3-year terms/normally maximum of 2 terms)
- Team (bodies that are standing, spiritual/non-operational, elected leadership for 3-year terms, normally maximum of 2 terms)
- Working Group (bodies that are ad hoc, may be time-specific, open-ended, or evolve into a Committee or Team, leadership is not elected)

It should be noted that the proposed change in name is not meant to imply any kind of change in status. We’re currently exploring the following mix of committees, teams, and working groups.

- Affirming Ministry Vision Keepers Team
- Communications Working Group
- Family Ministry Team
- Finance Committee
- Generous Spirit Team
- Governance Working Group
- Lay Pastoral Visitation Team
- Living into Right Relations Team
- Membership Nurturing Working Group (a future development)
- Ministry & Personnel Committee
- Net Zero Team
- Nominating Working Group
- Property Committee
- Racism Awareness Working Group
- Technology Working Group
- UCW
- Village Commons Council (a future development)
- Volunteer Animation Team
- Worship Planning Team

Groups and Gatherings not related to Governance: We wanted to acknowledge that we have many important groups and gatherings within our congregation that are not related to Governance.

- **Shalom Seekers / HAIR / Women’s Spirituality / Forest Church / Meditation—Centering Prayer / Pub Theology / Bible Study** – primarily spiritual formation activities (has a relational-building component), may have either lay or Ministerial leadership
- **Men’s Breakfast / Book Club / Drummers** – primarily relational-building activities (has a spiritual component); volunteer leadership
- **Hands and Hearts for Africa / Krasman Centre Lunches / Breakfast Club** – outreach and social justice activities; volunteer leadership

Leadership and Congregational Development

Throughout the pandemic, each week James has intentionally acknowledged at the beginning of worship individuals and groups from the congregation who contribute to the life and work of this faith community. We are more than grateful for all the time, talent and treasure resources that are shared to help us in the mission of our church. RHUC can appear as a somewhat complex place and it may be difficult to understand who does what and how things happen. Being separated from one another during a global pandemic doesn't help the situation.

There are many on-going activities and ways to engage in the life this faith community. Our congregation is, like many others, in transition as older members pass away and others may choose to move to other communities to be nearer family or begin a new chapter. Some people who have always taken on leadership roles or have been key volunteers are no longer with us. However, the good news is we are welcoming new members and are interested in providing opportunities for people to participate in the life of the congregation whether they are new or have been part of RHUC for a long time and would like to get involved in something new.

Our new governance model has established a Leadership and Congregational Development Forum and within that forum a Volunteer Animation Team to help us better understand what people are interested in doing/learning/contributing, whether you have particular skills that you are willing to share from time-to-time or for a longer period of time. While there are leadership positions that need to be filled from a governance perspective, we want people to feel supported in everything they do and not feel intimidated by roles where they may feel they don't know enough.

There are great opportunities to share and develop skills and knowledge. While the Volunteer Animation Team will try to discern interests, hobbies, and skills, they always welcome those who indicate a willingness to participate.

This vibrant faith community has been through many changes over the years. We are living in an increasingly diverse community in the midst of a global pandemic with bold long-range plans to re-develop our facilities to include a Centre for Community and the Arts that speaks to our mission to be a vibrant and hospitable place in the core of Richmond Hill and our commitment to climate action.

If you have ideas to share – we would welcome them. We wish to develop a database of interests and skills. Please do not fear being overloaded as we respect family and work needs and will honour the amount of time/skill you are willing to share. If you want to learn more, please contact DJ McCready, Leadership and Congregational Development Forum Facilitator at djmcc@rogers.com.

DJ McCready, Facilitator

A special thank you to Sandra Loughton for her time editing the report.