



Richmond Hill United Church
An Affirming Ministry



March 22, 2020: Fourth Sunday in Lent

The following resource is offered to help you worship at home, either on your own or by connecting online. To access the worship service, simply go to www.rhuc.org. Click the “Upcoming Services” link (accessible through the “Spirit” page or the “spirituality” tab on the homepage). This will take you to RHUC's Facebook page where you can watch the livestream of the service. You don't need to be on Facebook yourself to see a Facebook page. If you can't connect live, the service is saved on our page. We may be apart physically but we are still a community of faith spiritually, and digitally. Online Services: facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/

Centred in Christ

Lighting the Community Candle: As the candle in the sanctuary is lit, you are invited to light your own candle at home. We may be dispersed in body, but together we still shine with Christ's light.

Acknowledgement of the Land: We take time to give thanks for the land upon which we gather. No matter where we live, we do so gratefully for Indigenous communities who cared for this land long before the arrival of settlers and other newcomers to Canada.

Opening Prayer

As we come together, I invite you to take a deep breath.

Let the air fill your lungs. Feel the gift of life present there, aware that Hebrew uses the same word for both breath and Spirit.

As you continue to breathe deeply, let the peace that comes from God be with you.

This is a time of uncertainty. We seek answers but are not sure where to find them.

We may be fearful, needing comfort and stability once more.

In the midst of these feelings, the one we call God is with us, giving us strength, shielding us in grace, connecting us in community, dispersed as we are.

We pray together trusting in this, trusting in the one who brings light to each of us. **Amen.**

Hymn: “As the Deer Pants for the Water” (*Voices United*, 766)

**1 As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you;
you alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.
You alone are my strength, my shield
to you alone may my spirit yield;
you alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you.**

**2. Day and night I cry, my heart is breaking,
tears my only food,
while my enemies jeer and taunt me saying
"Where is now your God?" R.**

**3. Why am I so sad, so troubled, why must
suffering be so long?
I will hope in you my God and saviour,
praise you with a song! R.**

Reflecting Together as a Community

Prayer of Self Awareness

Holy One, you have drawn near, ready to surprise us with your presence,

But we stick with familiar patterns, preferring to hold to the tried and true.

Sung response: Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Christe eleison Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Your love is present all around us, your light of wisdom given to all,

But we try to lock it away, setting conditions on who can interpret your word.

Sung response: Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Christe eleison Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison.

You offer your healing without limits or restrictions,

But we question whether it is even possible, insisting it comes only via expected avenues.

Sung response: Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Christe eleison Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Assurance of Grace

We are grateful, Holy One. Though we may turn away, you are always present,
ready to welcome us with compassion and patient grace.

First Reading: John, chapter 9, selected verses

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth.

Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?"

Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's works might be seen in him. While it's daytime, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes.

Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" So the man went away and washed. When he returned, he could see. The man's neighbors and those who used to see him when he was a beggar said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

Some said, "It is," and others said, "No, it's someone who looks like him." But the man said, "Yes, it's me!"

They led the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees who asked him how he came to see.

The man told them, "He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see."

Some Pharisees said, "This man isn't from God, because he breaks the Sabbath law." Others said, "How can a sinner do miraculous signs like these?" So they were divided. ¹⁷ Some of the Pharisees questioned the man who had been born blind again: "What do you have to say about him, since he healed your eyes?"

He replied, "He's a prophet."

They responded, "You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?" Then they expelled him.

Jesus heard they had expelled the man born blind. Finding him, Jesus said, "Do you believe in the Human One?"

He answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

Jesus said, "You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you."

The man said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped Jesus.

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

Instrumental

Second Reading: Excerpt from Scroll II of *The Greatest Salesman of the World* by Og Mandino

"I will greet this day with love in my heart. And how will I do this? Henceforth will I look on all things with love and be born again. I will love the sun for it warms my bones; yet I will love the rain for it cleanses my spirit. I will love the light for it shows me the way; yet I will love the darkness for it shows me the stars. I will welcome happiness as it enlarges my heart; yet I will endure sadness for it opens my soul."

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

Message: "A Changed Perspective"

If you are unable to connect live via RHUC's Facebook page, a recording of the sermon has been saved on the page for you to listen to as part of the "at home" worship service.

Time of reflection: *We take a moment to pause in silence to reflect on what has been shared.*

Sharing in a Spirit of Gratitude

Prayers of the People:

Gracious One, in this Lenten time, we seek your strength and wisdom.

Our normal patterns of worship, of work, of life, have been interrupted.

We know Lent is a time when we can be surprised by new insights and experiences but what we are facing as a community, a nation, a world is not what we had in mind.

As we continue in these uncertain days, may we see more than challenges,

but also moments of grace, opportunities to share your love and life-giving presence with others.

May we maintain strength of body and clarity of purpose. May the self-isolation we face not become a barrier to helping others. May we find creative ways to work together, especially in service of those who are most vulnerable in this time.

As we continue to pray for the places in the world most impacted by the pandemic – China, Iran, Italy, we remember countries in the southern hemisphere that are newly facing this crisis, especially in Africa. As countries all around the world face lockdown, we face an escalating economic crisis as well.

We are grateful for government support at this time yet pray we all may find ways to support the small businesses and other employers who will be hit hardest by any loss of revenue, let alone long term.

In the wake of this health crisis, we pray for cooler heads, for an end to senseless scapegoating, especially those of Chinese descent. No one people or group are to blame for this virus.

Even as we face this emergency we know there are other issues that need our attention: the climate is still under threat; precious watersheds need protecting from pollution and other harms; Syria is still in conflict as are other regions in our world; as oil prices tumble we're facing further economic trouble; closer to home we have loved ones facing cancer, families grieving, friends struggling in many ways.

May we hold all these needs close to our hearts and in the end pass through these days yet stronger.

Let us pause now in silence, calling to mind the needs of those we know and love...

We gather all these concerns together, praying a version of Jesus' Prayer based on a Maori translation...

The Prayer of Jesus (*adapted from a Maori translation*)

Eternal Spirit, Father and Mother of us all, your hallowed name echoes throughout the universe. May your justice be followed by all peoples; may your will be done by all creatures; may your peace and freedom come to all nations. For the hurts we inflict on each other, forgive us; with the bread we need for today, feed us; in times of temptation and testing, strengthen us; from trials too great to endure, spare us; from the grip of all that is evil, free us. The glory of your Shalom is the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Called beyond Ourselves to Minister to the World

Hymn: "As the Sun with Longer Journey" (*Voices United #111*)

**1 As the sun with longer journey
melts the winter's snow and ice,
with its slowly growing radiance
warms the seed beneath the earth,
may the sun of Christ's uprising
gently bring our hearts to life.**

**2 Through the days of waiting, watching
in the desert of our sin,
searching on the far horizon
for a sign of cloud or wind,
we await the healing waters
of our Saviour's victory.**

**3 Praise be given to the Maker
of the seasons' yearly round:
to the Speaker through the Spoken
in their living Breath of love
as the ever turning seasons
roll to their eternal rest.**

Benediction

One: May the Christ who walks on wounded feet walk with you on the road.
May the Christ who serves with wounded hands stretch out your hands to serve.
May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart open up your hearts to love.
May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,
and may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you. Amen.

All: Amen.