

Please be advised that the church building is closed until further notice. As a loving and compassionate community, it is imperative we keep everyone safe. All communal gatherings in the building are suspended. Worship and other congregational gatherings are hosted online. To access weekly worship that is hosted through our Facebook page, follow this link: facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/. It is livestreamed at 10:30 AM and a recording of the service is archived on the page. In addition, worship will be facilitated using Zoom. Details regarding how to connect to this platform will be emailed each week to those on our contact list.

To access the home based worship resource so you can use to follow along or take time for personal reflection, follow this link: [Home Prayers](#)

You can find an at home "Discovery Time" with children here: Not available on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020

Following the online service, a recording of the message will be posted through the blog.

In this challenging time, it is important that we look after each other. If you are able to pick up groceries and other supplies for those who are homebound, please contact the church. Equally, if you are in need of this support, call the church or email office@rhuc.org.

If you are in need of pastoral care or spiritual support, please contact Rev. James Ravenscroft. Call him at 647-705-2754 or you can reach him by email, james@rhuc.org.

We are grateful for all those who are able to support the ongoing ministry of Richmond Hill United Church. If you would like to make a contribution, you can do so through CanadaHelps.org. <http://www.rhuc.org/donate.html>

May we continue to keep each other and world in prayer, especially those who are most vulnerable, those who are grieving or struggling, and all of those on the frontline putting themselves and their families at risk to keep all of us safe. We will get through this together.

Minister's Message: How do you celebrate Holy Week during a pandemic? Many of us will understandably focus more on the cross than the empty tomb. How can I think about resurrection when all I feel is pain, sorrow, uncertainty? And it is okay to sit with these feelings, difficult as it can be to do so, tempted as we are each year to move quickly from Good Friday to Easter. There is a tweet going around at the moment, saying that we should all take advantage of the extra time we have and learn a new skill right now, and if we don't we betray that we didn't lack time, just discipline. A trauma psychologist from Beirut rightly took a strip off of the author, reminding all of us that we have more on our minds and in our hearts than learning a new skill. What we need to offer one another, including ourselves, is compassion. I heard someone suggest recently that the reason we all feel muddled and unsure right now is that we are experiencing collective grief. We are grieving for those who have died, those who have lost loved ones, those who cannot be with people who are sick and maybe dying, grieving job losses and financial uncertainty, grieving for the whole world. This is how we feel right now, and yet in the midst of it people are also reaching out with caring, with support, with love. In this time considered sacred not just to Christians but to Jews, I offer this poem by Lynne Ungar, a Unitarian Minister, entitled "Pandemic".



What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.
And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

worship and music

Holy Week & Easter: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday services are pre-recorded and accessible on our Facebook page facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/. For the Thursday service have some food to share as well as a bowl of water, soap and lotion for a handwashing ritual. For the Saturday service, have a candle on hand to light.

Sunday, April 12: It's Easter! Easter Sunrise at 6:00 a.m. We celebrate the resurrection by sharing in the sunrise for wherever we are. We will connect via Zoom. Contact info will be sent by email. Contact James at james@rhuc.org for this information.

Sunday, April 19: We meet the disciples eight days later. Thomas had not been present when the Risen One appeared. This Sunday he is there (John 20:19-29). We continue to worship via Zoom. Information on how to connect will be sent via email.

RHUC's Facebook page, Online Services:
facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/

Sunday offering and Lenten Givings (Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold. RHUC, like other churches, depends on donations and rentals to pay our bills. Our building continues to cost money even while closed and we continue to keep our employees working, albeit in ways that are different from normal tasks. We appreciate those who use on Pre Authorized Remittance (PAR) and recognize some may have to reduce their donation until the lockdown is over and we hope others can increase their donations to make up for those reductions and the reductions in rental income. For those not PAR, please consider making sure you get your weekly envelope money in and we hope as well you will consider some extra to compensate for the loss in income. You can use e-transfer to office@rhuc.org, **Canada Helps**, (<http://www.rhuc.org/donate.html>), or give post-dated cheques to the Church, 10201 Yonge St., Richmond Hill, L4C 3B2. We are keeping in touch with the United Church of Canada and governments to ensure we get what bridge funds might be available to us during physical distancing.

Moderator Richard Bott's Easter Message, 2020:
<https://united-church.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ff2087d5fde243a770ed893a8&id=74df80a816&e=400fa105d5>

programs for all

Lenten Bible Study: Thank you to all who participated. We will take a break during Holy Week and Easter. Let James know if you would like to continue exploring themes.

Shalom Seekers: Although we are not meeting physically at the church during this COVID-19 crisis, we will continue to check-in and visit with each other on Monday mornings at 10 a.m. via video chat on Zoom for those who can join us. If you can't join us on Zoom, please continue to send your check-in on Sundays or Mondays by e-mail, or just call someone in the group to chat! Please look for an e-mail on Friday or early Monday morning that will include a link to join the call which will be initiated by Peg Hiscoke. We hope you are doing well and can join us with your coffee or tea on Monday, April 6th. Sandra & Peg, Co-Facilitators

RHUC Book Club: Please stay tuned here for more information about our plans for April, May and beyond. Until we can safely meet again in person, we will try to get together once a month on Zoom to visit with each other on-line. Stay well and keep reading! Sandra Loughton ~ Facilitator

Prayers Shawls: Finished knitted/crocheted shawls are given to people who are unwell, grieving, moving away and also to celebrate a birth, joining our church or other special occasion as a way to show the church cares with a hope that the warmth of the shawl will bring comfort and joy. **Even though the church building is closed, please continue to make the shawls at home.** Donna Smith, Coordinator, 905-884-6306

Youth Confirmation: Given that ongoing requirements for physical distancing will likely stretch for a number of weeks yet, confirmation preparation classes will be held in the fall rather than this spring.

church news

Update on Grocery Home Deliveries: Last week in this space James reached out to people who need groceries and other essentials brought to their homes, and to those who would like to help with delivery. This week I'd like to share a bit more about what is going on behind the scenes as a group of RHUC volunteers has been gearing up for this task.

We have reached out by phone to dozens of households, starting with those we think may be most likely to need home deliveries. Fortunately, everyone we have called so far is getting by. Families and friends are rallying around our most vulnerable members to deliver essentials, prepare meals, and so on. Our concern is that these support systems themselves may be vulnerable down the road, and we need a back-up plan.

We are now creating a network and a system for this task. There will be a lot of details to work through, but the basic idea is very simple – shopping on behalf of someone who can't get out. In neighbourhoods around the GTA, in fact all over the country, local organizations, like churches, are doing exactly what we are doing.

So we are organizing two teams of volunteers to work together. The "Driver Team" team will look after shopping and delivery. The "Caller Team" will be available by phone to take requests and walk people through the steps. One of the callers will be in touch if you call the office, and we expect to have a list available of both teams, in the next few days.

Help us to get the word out within the RHUC community. If you know of someone who is housebound and in need of groceries, please have them call one of us, or let the office know, or call me.

The committee is: Donna Byres, Donna McErlain, Donna Smith, Doug Loweth, June Blanchette, Nicole Moore, Penny Fabbro, James and Sandra Loughton.

Doug Loweth 416-553-8706 loweth@sympatico.ca

keeping up our spirits

As we look to the coming days and weeks of "sheltering in place" it is important we keep our spirits up. Each week RHUC Reflections will include some ideas, reflective words, poems, recipes (send to Deb at office@rhuc.org), etc. to help in this challenging time.

Several years ago when the CBC was facing government cutbacks (there are still those who want to see the CBC privatized), James joined a group called Friends of CBC. During this sheltering time, Friends of CBC have sent daily emails of things to watch or listen to. On one occasion they sent videos of Canadian musicians performing in their homes, including pianist Brian Finley. He played a piece from his "Preludes to Canada" entitled Red River Dreams. It makes you feel like you are travelling down the river. Lovely piece of music. James recommends the whole album. You get to travel in your mind from Newfoundland to the North and all the way to the Pacific coast to watch the sunset.

Easter video: Easter Mystery in Extraordinary Times:
<https://secure.kairosCanada.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=4183&qid=874711>

Hot cross buns Recipe:

½ cup warm water
2 tsp sugar
2 packages yeast (4 1/2 tsp) or quick rise yeast can be used.
Mix and let sit for 15 minutes.

2 cups warm water
¼ cup shortening
2 tsp salt
½ cup molasses
2 beaten eggs
Add to yeast mixture.

4 cups whole wheat flour.
Add to above and mix well.

4 cups white flour
3 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp nutmeg
¼ tsp ground cloves
1 cup raisins or currants

Mix with above and knead for 10 minutes. Let rise for one hour and then punch down. Make into buns and allow to rise for one more hour. Bake at 400 F for 15 – 20 minutes. You can also half the recipe.

Please keep the ideas and stories coming. It is a lovely way to feel connected.

outreach activities

Minute for Mission: The Downtown Mission of Windsor, Ontario, provides food for the body, nurture for the spirit, shelter for the homeless, advocacy for the impoverished, and opportunity for human growth—all through its outreach program. This faith-based, not-for-profit organization focuses on serving and advocating for men, women, and children who struggle with poverty and homelessness. Whether it's providing emergency shelter, a hot meal, or a food pack for an individual or a family, the Downtown Mission is there with faith and caring. Thanks to a grant from Mission & Service, The Downtown Mission opened its doors in 1972 when a group of forward-thinking individuals at Central United Church started a coffee program for the area's homeless men. Called the Open Door Lounge, it had a maximum capacity of 28 and served coffee and donuts. More than 40 years later, the Mission continues to give thanks for the support of the community and of Mission & Service that has enabled it to grow and meet the needs of those it serves by offering a wide and diverse range of services. Many people's lives have been changed as a result of the love, care, and respect they received from The Downtown Mission during difficult periods they faced. A little help made a great deal of difference.

Helping Indigenous Communities during this time:

We received this message from our friends at HIP (Honouring Indigenous Peoples). "We are hearing many good news stories of people coming together for the well-being of our communities. We are interested to hear about your activities and will post reports and pictures on our social media and in our upcoming newsletters. We all need to work and support each other during this time of crisis and this is one way everyone can help however, much more is still needed. Please consider donating to HIP's COVID-19 FUND by visiting

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/HIP/campaign/hip-covid-19-fund>

As Indigenous and Non-Indigenous partners, we are committed to working together to battle COVID-19 for the well-being of our communities. HIP and its services are needed more today than ever. We continue to leverage our supporters and contacts to facilitate delivery of resources to those in need. This includes funding for food-banks, connections for hand-sanitizer, supporting education and delivery of needed supplies. We encourage each of you to continue to reach out by phone or video conference to check on your Indigenous and Non-Indigenous friends. Everyone needs support during these times of isolation and a simple conversation can make a world of difference. Together we can make a difference."

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