



Sunday worship each week is livestreamed at 10:30 AM using Zoom. Details regarding how to connect to this platform will be emailed each week to those on our contact list. If you are not on our contact list and would like these details, contact James ([james@rhuc.org](mailto:james@rhuc.org)). Following the online service, a recording of the full service will be posted on our Facebook page. Follow this link: [facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/](https://facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/). In addition, the weekly message will be posted on the [RHUC Blog](#).

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: [Discovery Time](#)

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](mailto: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](mailto: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). <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:** It was only a matter of time. Up until now there has been a cooperative spirit between levels of government as we all try to fight the global crisis together. But then party politics reasserted itself on two fronts this week. First, Alberta's premier criticized our national response to COVID-19, especially how long it is taking Health Canada to approve tests as well as possible treatments. Then inexplicably the outgoing leader of the Conservative Party of Canada seemed to side with the President of the US, suggesting that ongoing concerns with the WHO's ties to China raise questions as to the decisions our Federal government has made in handling the pandemic. I take consolation in that these two statements at least give us a sense of normalcy. It was always doubtful the cooperation we have been seeing would last forever. And yet, even as politics is getting back to normal, we are along way from that being the case for most aspects of our lives. In this regard, I am buoyed by how much people continue to work together. This was highlighted in "The Liberal" in an article about "Richmond Hill Good Neighbours" and the work this body of 400 local people is accomplishing, everything from sewing face masks, to collecting buttons to making food to give to people in need. No surprise that a number of RHUC members are part of this group. This is the kind of group effort we need, and not just during this health crisis. This crisis has shone a spotlight on many gaps in our society, gaps that too many people are slipping through. We cannot keep letting those of us who are older seniors, have disabilities, struggle with mental health, work multiple jobs for minimum wage, struggle to find adequate housing, the list goes on, to keep living as they do. It is my prayer that as we slowly flatten the curve and get back to a semblance of normality that the cooperative spirit we have exhibited will continue, especially as we work together to create a society where no one slips through the gaps we have allowed to form. May this crisis time also be an opportunity to look at the society we have and then to do what we can to make it better for everyone.

## worship and music

**Sunday, April 19:** As we continue to worship through Zoom, we reflect together on the story of Thomas and his reaction when he is told by his friends of Jesus' appearance to them. (John 20:19-29). We use the term "Doubting Thomas" negatively but his response reminds us of the importance of asking questions and weighing possible answers. Following worship, the Zoom Room will remain open to give people a chance to connect with one another.

**Sunday, April 26:** We will continue to worship online. We will explore another resurrection story - Jesus appearing on the shore while the disciples fish. When they come in with their haul of fish, he has breakfast prepared for them. (John 21:1-14).

**Sunday, May 3:** We pick up from where we left off in John 21. In verses 15 to 25 we hear Jesus ask Peter three times if he loves him, giving Peter a chance to make up for his threefold denial of Jesus. RHUC's Facebook page, Online Services: [facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/](https://facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/)

**Worship Notes:** During this time of self-isolation and physical distancing, we are not able to come together to worship as we are accustomed. Some people will connect online through Zoom, others will watch a recording of the service when it is posted on Facebook in the early afternoon, and some like to use the prayers that are posted on the website. It was recently suggested that others would prefer more of a DIY approach to worship. To this end, in this space for the next while, we will list possible hymns that go with the readings for a Sunday. This Sunday the bible readings are: John 20:19-29 and Acts 22-32. Possible hymns include: "The Strife is O'er" (VU 159), "Welcome, happy Morning" (VU 161) "O Sons and Daughters let Us Sing" (VU 170), "This Joyful Eastertide" (VU 177) and "Peace Be With You" (MV 215). There is also an "Easter Prayer" that can be found in Voices United (174).

**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.

## programs for all

**Pub Theology:** Next Friday (April 24) we will once again have a virtual Pub Theology via Zoom. We will come together at 7:30 PM to discuss faith, spirituality and life's big questions. Contact James (james@rhuc.org) for the log-in details.

**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.

**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

**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. You can also call the phone number listed in the e-mail if you don't have the Zoom app on your device.

If you can't join us on Zoom, please continue to send your check-in on Sundays or Mondays by email, 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 20th**.

Sandra Loughton & Peg Hiscoke, Co-Facilitators

**RHUC Book Club:** As we continue with physical distancing and staying at home, I hope you are able to get some reading material to help pass the time. I have dropped off nine different books to a few people, so if you are really desperate for something to read, please get in touch with me and I'm happy to lend some of my books out. I can drop them off with no contact.

In order to stay connected, we had a Zoom meeting at the end of March. I am going to set up another meeting for Wednesday, April 22nd at 4 p.m. for those who would like to join us on Zoom. You can also call a designated phone number and be connected by phone with the others who are on the computer screen so you don't need to have Zoom or a computer to take part. You will get an e-mail from me before the 22nd with instructions and a password to join the on-line meeting, as well as the phone number to call if you aren't joining via a computer. Fingers crossed that it will work.

Stay well everyone. ~ Sandra Loughton, Facilitator

**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

**A Request for Help:** As the self-isolating protocols continue, there is an escalating impact on our economy. Money is going to get tight for some, including friends, neighbours and members of RHUC. To this end, we invite you to help out if you can by donating grocery cards. When you order your grocery card (still a fundraiser for our church, BTW), donate a card to help someone who needs assistance. Contact Deb (office@rhuc.org) for more information.

**A Message from the Board:** As part of discussions during the Board meetings this past week (Wednesday, April 15), there was good discussion about the pandemic and the necessity of doing things differently by accessing technology, reaching out with phone calls, using social media more. There is much that we are learning that we can carry forward as a congregation once things regain a semblance of normality. To this end, James is calling together an ad hoc team of folks who will make a note of what we are learning and make recommendations for the future. If this is a task that interests you, please email James (james@rhuc.org).

**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.**

From Sandra Loughton: 'During this strange COVID-19 time we have heard all kinds of stories of people who are stepping up and going 'above and beyond' to help others. These stories are so heartwarming and, boy, do we need to hear stories like this right now.

My daughter-in-law, Sabina, is working on the frontlines at the COVID-19 Clinic at the Toronto Western Hospital right now and also in their Emergency Department. I shared Sabina's blog post a few weeks ago with a bunch of family members and friends, including those in the RHUC Book Club. In the article, Sabina was talking about her efforts to sew cloth surgical caps for herself and her colleagues at TWH to wear at work. With these homemade caps, they can wash them after every shift and re-use them. Of course, she doesn't have that much time to sew right now as she's working long shifts at least five days a week. She enlisted her other half (my son, Geoff) and taught him how to make the caps! He is busy teaching classes on-line now, so his sewing time has been severely reduced.

Last week I got an unexpected e-mail from Brenda Hills, a member of the RHUC Book Club. She said in a very understated and humble way that she had just finished sewing TWENTY surgical caps for Sabina and her co-workers. I was dumbfounded and started crying as I was reading the e-mail. I went down to Brenda's home later that day and picked up the wonderful collection of 20 surgical caps sewn in about five or six different patterns of lovely cotton material.



Those caps will be distributed to staff working on the frontlines. They will be very appreciated and Sabina was so thrilled when I told her about the caps on the phone. As I said, amazing stories are coming out of this extremely challenging time in history. So many Canadians are showing us the very best of this country and it's a great time to be Canadian. Stay safe and healthy everyone. And a huge thank you and hugs to Brenda.'

## CORONAVIRUS LETTER TO HUMANITY

The earth whispered but you did not hear.  
The earth spoke but you did not listen  
The earth screamed but you turned her off.  
And so I was born...

I was not born to punish you..  
I was born to awaken you..  
The earth cried out for help...

Massive flooding. But you didn't listen.  
Burning fires. But you didn't listen.  
Strong hurricanes. But you didn't listen.  
Terrifying Tornadoes. But you didn't listen.

You still don't listen to the earth when  
Ocean animals are dying due to pollutants in the waters.  
Glaciers melting at an alarming rate.  
Severe drought.

You didn't listen to how much negativity the earth is receiving.  
Non-stop wars.  
Non-stop greed.  
You just kept going on with your life..

No matter how much hate there was..  
No matter how many killings daily..  
It was more important to get that latest iPhone than worry about  
what the earth was trying to tell you..

But now I am here.  
And I've made the world stop on its tracks.  
I've made YOU finally listen.  
I've made you take refuge.  
I've made you stop thinking about materialistic things..

Now you are like the earth...  
You are only worried about YOUR survival.  
How does that feel?  
I give you fever.. As the fires burn on earth.  
I give you respiratory issues.. As pollution fills the earth air.  
I give you weakness as the earth weakens every day.  
I took away your comforts..

Your outings.  
The things you would use to forget about the planet and its pain.  
And I made the world stop...

And now...  
China has better air quality.. Skies are clear blue because factories  
are not spewing pollution into the earth's air.  
The water in Venice is clean and dolphins are being seen. Because  
the gondola boats that pollute the water are not being used.

YOU are having to take time to reflect on what is important in your  
life.

Again I am not here to punish you.. I am here to Awaken you...

When all this is over and I am gone... Please remember these  
moments..

Listen to the earth.  
Listen to your soul.  
Stop Polluting the earth.  
Stop Fighting among each other.  
Stop caring about materialistic things.

And start loving your neighbours.  
Start caring about the earth and all its creatures.  
Start believing in a Creator.  
Because next time I may come back even stronger....

Signed, Coronavirus Written by: Vivienne R Reich

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

## outreach activities

**Minute for Mission:** Water is sacred—a gift of the Creator and a source of life. Clean water is a cornerstone of public health and a fundamental human right. In 2015, United Nations member states established 17 goals essential to sustainable development. The sixth goal is the availability of clean water for all. Access to safe drinking water is one of today's most pressing environmental issues. Large numbers of people have no access to water and lack adequate sanitation to keep water sources clean. According to UN statistics, millions of people die every year from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. More than two billion people are currently living with the risk of reduced access to freshwater resources. By 2050, at least one in four people is likely to be affected by a chronic shortage of fresh water. The United Church of Canada, as a member of the World Council of Churches, joined with other churches in the Ecumenical Water Network, a Mission & Service partner. The EWN brings churches together in faith-based advocacy for the preservation, responsible management, and the equitable distribution of water for all. On-the-ground Mission & Service partners like People's Action Forum in Zambia and the Moravian Church in Nicaragua play important roles in establishing community access to water—from digging boreholes to providing training on pump maintenance and protection of the water supply.

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