



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: [Discovery Time](#)

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: As we head towards the end of our third week in necessary seclusion, I am struck by the resilience of the human spirit. As I make phone calls, send and receive emails and texts, connect online, over and over I hear how people are keeping up their spirits by keeping up the spirits of others. To this end Linda Butler sent an invitation for us to light a candle and join in a prayer each evening at 8:00 pm in solidarity with our neighbours around the world. One great idea I came across was how in Prince George, BC, people are putting hearts in their windows, on their doors, even stringing up Christmas lights in a heart shape on their homes, all as a way to say that we have each other's support. Apparently other cities and towns have picked up on this. Wouldn't it be great if we started the same thing here. One group that needs to know we have their backs are medical professionals, including our own members, folks on the frontline in hospitals, medical centres, as paramedics, and the like, all placing their health and lives on the line for us. One way we can support them is to make donations for the quick purchase of PPEs, personal protective equipment. Michael Garron Hospital in Toronto has launched a drive encouraging businesses and individuals to help - <https://www.mghf.ca/mgh1000masks>. With increasing calls for people to wear masks when outside, in case they are asymptomatic, they have also been behind a campaign for people to sew personal masks. There are many ways we can support one another, including by continuing to financially support our congregation. Thank goodness we have a large number of people at RHUC who contribute through PAR. To make it easier to contribute to the congregation via CanadaHelps, we are placing a link on the homepage of our website. This is a challenging time for all of us but I am struck by how much it is drawing out the best in us as well. To paraphrase one person in a Zoom chat, "I believe at the end of all this we will be changed for the better." I pray he is right.

worship and music

We begin Holy Week as we mark Palm Sunday.

Sunday, April 5: We remember Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem with a virtual palm parade. We then look ahead to the end of the week, preparing for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday by reading what happened between Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem and his eventual arrest. We will still use Facebook Live as the main platform to broadcast the service but will also send out details to join the worship service through Zoom. This will allow us to see one another if we wish, especially for the palm parade.

Services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday will be pre-recorded and available for download on the website.

Sunday, April 12: It's Easter! We have two opportunities to worship. An Easter Sunrise service at 6:30 am and our regular service with virtual communion at 10:30 am. Both will use Zoom, plus Facebook Live for the 10:30 am service.

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

Worship Notes: We are used to the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter being very engaging with rich symbols and evocative ritual actions. It's the kind of thing you expect to be in church for, making this year's celebrations are challenge. We are up to it though. In order to add a layer of greater participation for Palm Sunday, we are opting to give everyone the option to access the worship service through Zoom. Deb will send the information for that via an email. Those who have participated in Zoom meetings can attest to the sense of community you feel as you see people's faces. This will help with the parade portion of Palm Sunday. The Zoom-facilitated worship will simultaneously be broadcast onto Facebook as we have done the last three Sundays. So choose either option to connect for worship. For Zoom, there is also the option to simply phone in so you can listen to the worship service if you don't want to be on the computer. To ensure the richness of the symbols of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday (and hopefully Holy Saturday), the services for these days will be pre-recorded and available on the website. Then as we come back together for Easter Sunday, we will again connect through Zoom, from your windows and decks at 6:30 am so we can all see the sunrise together, and for virtual communion at 10:30 am.

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.

Upcoming Transfer of Membership: According to the polity of The United Church of Canada, while we are all part of the Church by reason of our baptism, we live that out in a local congregation. We become members of a congregation either through the Reaffirmation of our Faith and the Laying on of Hands (also known as confirmation) or by transferring our membership from one congregation to another. The United Church recognizes confirmation celebrated in other denominations. During the upcoming Easter season, a Sunday is being set aside to recognize people who would like to be members of RHUC. Please let James or Deb know if you would either like to transfer your membership or to be received into membership by reaffirmation.

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

H.A.I.R.: Due to the closure of the church, H.A.I.R. is cancelled for the time being. We will look at ways to meet online.

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



UCW's bus trip to Thornbury has been cancelled due to the Covid-19 Virus.

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.

Anne Lamott: 12 truths I learned from life and writing | TED Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_lamott_12_truths_i_learned_from_life_and_writing/up-next?language=en#t-375003

Sent in from Kathy McBey: 'Do Re Mi' - Covid 19 version
<https://youtu.be/MMBh-ao3tvE>

Music teacher plays church bells daily to lift spirits:
https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/banff-bells-church-music-covid-1.5510110?_vfz

One of the gifts of this time in seclusion is the breather that nature is getting. We are reminded that as we offer one another support, we also need to keep offering support to our fellow creatures. To this end the David Suzuki Foundation offers some ideas for kids to make connections with nature.

1. PLANT SEEDS OF CHANGE: Plant a pollinator patch and bring bees and butterflies back to your neighbourhood! Check out their Pollinators page to learn about planting native plants and other ways you can help attract pollinators unique to your area.
2. CREATE A GRATITUDE TREE: Bring nature inside. Write a love letter to nature and create a gratitude tree! Use sticky notes or construction paper and showcase them in a window for everyone to enjoy. Have your family or friends send you answers to the question, "What do you love most about nature?" Visit The Love Lettering Project.
3. PAINT WITH NATURE: Paint rocks with positive messages or images of love. Place the rocks around a favourite tree. Make sure to use low- or no-VOC (volatile organic compound) paint so you don't harm the environment.

As we connect with nature, it seems that nature is reconnecting with us. We have all heard about the fish and birds coming back to Venice (not really true, they come every year in the Spring. People just have more time to notice this year.) There are other visits happening though. I encourage you to Google "welsh town mountain goats" to see how the town of Llandudno in Wales has been "taken over" by mountain goats from a nearby ridge, or "deer in French cathedral" to see a stag inspecting the inside of the space. Both stories brought a smile to my face. I'm sure they will for you too.

Esther Collier is writing a poem a day. This is the link to see what she adds daily:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1G5otTgIh26rQK8a3Uu8mFEJlWYOYIWvopp5qWSbDyEU/edit?usp=sharing>

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.

Nouwen Meditation: God is a God of the Living
[Listen to the Podcast](#)

God is a God of the Living

The mystery of God's love is not that our pain is taken away, but that God first wants to share that pain with us. Out of this divine solidarity comes new life. Jesus' being moved in the center of his being by human pain is indeed a movement toward new life. God is our God, the God of the living. In the divine womb of God, life is always born again. . . . The truly good news is that God is not a distant God, a God to be feared and avoided, a God of revenge, but a God who is moved by our pains and participates in the fullness of the human struggle.

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

outreach activities

Minute for Mission: Planting a Path to Reconciliation

Twenty-eight years ago when it was founded, Faith United Church in Kingston, Ontario, bought land near Highway 15 with the vision of creating a church building. Meeting in a local high school, they eventually decided to put their energy into being a caring community rather than into a building. Then, during the last year, Faith United began a time of discernment around the land. The members of the congregation felt inspired to walk a path of peace and offer the land as a place of healing. The church and the Indigenous peoples of Kingston are currently in conversation as they collaborate on how to create a space where all can find healing. Talking over tea and shared meals, they are exchanging ideas on how to come together in friendship. Currently they are considering creating a garden for reflection and reconciliation that contains Indigenous sacred medicine plants. Thanks to a grant from the Justice and Reconciliation Fund, supported by your gifts for Mission & Service, the Indigenous peoples of Kingston and Faith United Church members are able to move forward. "We open our eyes now," the Elders and congregation members shared in a report on the initiative. "We aren't blinded by hopefulness and naïveté: we know our vision for this piece of land is grand in size and workload. We also know that when we walk together in a good way, when we root the process in ceremony and healing, we are acknowledging we aren't walking this path alone. Together we can. Together we will. One step along the path of peace." May it be so!

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