



We will continue to livestream Sunday service 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). Following the online service, a recording of the full service will be posted on our Facebook page. Follow this link: [facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/](https://www.facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/). In addition, the weekly message will be posted on the [RHUC Blog](#).

If you ever find you're encountering issues using Zoom on Sunday you can always visit <https://status.zoom.us/> to check the site status. To access the home based worship resource so you can use to follow along or take time for personal reflection, follow this link: [Order of Service](#)

We understand that this is a strange time, but we will get through it together. Whether you are choosing to stay home or to worship in-person, we are still one community, committed to care for one another with compassion and love.



Minister's Message: Since the pandemic first began nine months ago, many people have spoken of their hope for a vaccine. Now Canada has approved the vaccine from Pfizer, with others likely to be approved down the road, and the first vaccinations will begin on Tuesday. Given this, you could say that our hopes have been realized, and the end of the pandemic is in sight, albeit with many months more of health protocols until the majority of us have received our shots. And yet that is just one way of considering "hope". Spiritually speaking, we mean something quite different from "a desire or wish with the expectation of its fulfillment" when we speak of this virtue, especially each Advent.

Advent is a celebration of hope as we consider the coming of Christ not just in the past but also in some future return in glory. We lift up these advents in a spirit of hope, even though the first was in the past and many of us don't expect Christ's second coming to be fulfilled in the way expressed by our spiritual ancestors in the decades following the resurrection. Rather, we live in a spirit of hope in the present as we sit between the past and future, believing that the same God who was revealed as Christ in Jesus continues to be revealed, present in our lives and drawing us forward in love, enabling us to grow in grace both as individuals and as a human family.

Hope in this context is more about openness, a deep trust and receptivity to the Spirit who is active in our lives. Hope is directed toward the Reign of God, always unfolding even as its promise is never fully realized. We catch glimpses of this hope as the world comes together to fight a pandemic, or we vow to address the social gaps revealed by it, but they are only glimpses of a more profound movement in peace and love that finds its source in God. That is the hope we lift up each Advent, so much more meaningful than expecting for a wish to be fulfilled.

As thankful as I am that our hope for a vaccine has been realized, I am much more grateful for the deeper hope that is at play, the presence of God's grace that is drawing us forward and enabling us all to grow in love. May that hope continue to be revealed in our lives.

worship and music

Discovery Time at home: [Discovery Time](#)

James' video to children:

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!AIBjmozEVDR0gZ9O8J06SWKWjo87OQ>

Sunday, December 13: As we light our fifth candle, we draw ever closer to our celebration of Christmas. We also pause to put some Christmas ornaments on the tree. We may not be doing this as a group this year, but the tradition continues just the same. As we turn to 2 Samuel 7:1-16 and Luke 1:26-38, we shift from the story of John the Baptist to that of Mary and her acceptance of becoming the mother of Jesus. Her "Yes" to the words of Gabriel is a pivotal moment, modelling the openness to which we are all called in our spiritual lives.

Wednesday, December 16 at 7:30 PM: A Christmas Lament - An Online Service of Prayer and Reflection for All who Feel Grief and Loss at Christmas: Each year there are people who find it hard to be merry in the festive season, but this Advent-Christmas most people are feeling blue. Many of us are experiencing loss this year, not the least of which feels like the loss of Christmas itself. Led by local clergy from the Anglican, Christian Reformed, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United Churches, this year's service of prayer and reflection will be held online. If you would like to take part, contact Deb (office@rhuc.org) for a Zoom link. The service will also be broadcast on RHUC's Facebook page.

Sunday, December 20: We celebrate a "Christmas Sunday" as we light our final candle and listen to the poem, "O Oriens", the Messianic title, "O Light of the East". We also hear Luke 2:1-14, the traditional telling of Jesus' birth as his parents journey to Bethlehem and he is laid in a manger, and Isaiah 9:2-7, the promise of an end to oppression and the coming of justice to all.



Christmas Eve, December 24: This year there will be three opportunities (dependent on infection numbers) to celebrate Christmas.

5:45 pm - An Outdoor "Open House": In contrast to what was posted last week, we are looking at a possible outdoor "drop-by" service instead of an indoor "by appointment" open house. Stay tuned for more details.

7:00 pm - Family Service on Zoom: This online service will focus on a child friendly version of the Christmas story (Luke 1:26-38; Luke 2:1-7; Luke 2:8-14; and Luke 2:15-19) through readings, art and song.

10:00 pm - Candlelight Communion Service: The late Christmas Eve service will focus on the Prologue of John (John 1:1-5, 9-14 and 16-18). Depending on infection numbers, the sanctuary may be open for a maximum of 50 people with all other people logging in for the service with Zoom. Those at home are reminded to have a candle ready for the candle-lighting portion of the service as well as to have bread and wine prepared so they may share in communion.

Sunday, December 27: A Christmas Lessons and Carols. For the first Sunday of the Christmas Season, we are preparing a lessons and carols type of service with carol singing paired with reflective readings.

Worship Notes: Whether a church is following the Celtic or Orthodox calendar and marking 6 weeks of Advent or following the more recent length of Advent and marking 4 Sundays, most churches have incorporated the tradition of lighting candles. We often designate them in a number of ways. In the United Church we are familiar with the themes of hope, peace, joy and love. We're also encouraged to consider alternatives like honouring the four directions or highlighting The Old Testament Prophets, John the Baptist, Shepherds and Angels. Some Orthodox churches highlight faith, hope, love, peace, repentance and communion. In the past we have used the image of the rising sun to focus our prayers and this year we have been highlighting the O Antiphons, the messianic titles that are highlighted in Evening Prayer in the Week leading up to Christmas and which we hear each year in the hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel". Ultimately, the themes all point to one main focus - we are preparing our hearts for the coming celebration of Christmas, to receive Christ who comes as light of the world.

AV upgrades: We are looking to make upgrades to our AV system at the church. This involves adding some hardware to our sound system so that it can be broadcast into Zoom, installing projectors so that people in the sanctuary can see everyone at home, and getting a camera for improved viewing at home. This project will assist us when we start having some people come to in-person worship while also continuing to broadcast the service through Zoom. The upgrades will help us to make worship experience meaningful both for people who are logging in from home as well as those who are coming into the sanctuary. It will also help us meet our long-term ministry goals.

Are you seeking some quiet in this busy time of year? Are you missing being in the sanctuary, especially as we head towards Christmas? Throughout Advent, we invite those who wish to book a time for some quiet reflection in the sanctuary. Email Deb (office@rhuc.org) and let her know when you would like to come. A member of the ministry team or a volunteer will open the space for you. Disinfectant spray will be available to bring you peace of mind.



Sunday offering: RHUC, like other churches, depends on donations and rentals to pay our bills. We appreciate those who use Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR). For

those not PAR, please consider making sure you get your weekly envelope money in (mailed in or mail slot on Centre. St. door) and we hope as well that 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 post-dated cheques to the Church, 10201 Yonge St., Richmond Hill, L4C 3B2.

programs for all

Women's Spirituality will gather this Sat., Dec. 12th at 10:00 via Zoom. Our program is about Miryam and "muddling through" Christmas 2020 with some frivolity added in. So, wear a Christmas frock and let's decorate Zoom for the season.

Winter Solstice with Three Rivers Forest Church: With virus transmission numbers still high, it is best for us to celebrate the coming Winter Solstice via Zoom. We will meet online at **7:00 PM on December 21**. Please have ahead of time a candle to light indoors and a birthday candle with matches that you can take outside as part of our ritual. We will take time together to make bird friendly tree decorations. A couple of options for this include making popcorn and cranberry garlands or suet and seed pinecones. Be sure to put together your supplies for these ahead of time along with some food and drink to "share". For log-in details, email james@rhuc.org.

Shalom Seekers: Please join us on Monday, December 14th for our pre-Christmas get-together on Zoom. An invitation will be sent out the day before via e-mail. We will enjoy some social time and look at some interesting trivia about the Christmas season and Christmas carols. Please remember to select a special Christmas ornament or keepsake to share with the group if you wish.

We will be taking a break until Monday, January 4th when we will continue with our study of **Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others** by Barbara Brown Taylor. For January 4th, please read Chapter 8: Failing Christianity.

New members are always welcome to join Shalom Seekers. Please speak to Peg Hiscoke or Sandra Loughton if you are interested in doing so.

Weekly Meditation: Weekly meditation is Wednesday evenings from 6:30 - 7:15 in the Chapel with social distancing and please wear a mask.



RHUC Book Club: Please consider joining the group on Zoom on **January 27 at 4 p.m.** to discuss Jeanine Cummins novel **American Dirt**. For more details about the book club, please speak to Sandra

Loughton, Facilitator. All the best to everyone for the holiday season and happy reading!

church news

Happy birthday to Anne Beckwith as she celebrates her **90th birthday on Tuesday, December 15th!**

Want to Get Crafty? As we well know, we had to cancel our annual Craft Dinner this year. But that doesn't mean we can't do crafts. Sandy Dimma had a great beading craft planned for this year and has donated kits (you can make either a wreath or a candy cane) for any of our younger congregants to use. The craft is especially appropriate for anyone who is 10 years old and under, but it would be fun to make these beaded crafts at any age. If you would like a kit, email Deb at office@rhuc.org to arrange a time to pick one up.

Board Minutes: The minutes for 2019 and 2020 are posted on RHUC's website under About Us - Governance. [Governance - Executive - Richmond Hill United Church \(rhuc.org\)](#)



Thank You from your Generous Spirit Team:

This has been a difficult year for so many, so words will never adequately express our gratitude for the ongoing support of so many people so that RHUC can continue to be a loving and inclusive community in the heart of the Village of Richmond Hill. Once you have reviewed this year's campaign materials and prayerfully considered what you are able to pledge for the coming year, please send in your form to the office (Richmond Hill United Church, 10,201 Yonge St., Richmond Hill, ON L4C 3B2). If you are not yet on PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) and would like to be, please let Deb know and she would be happy to help you set that up.

Going going gone!! Get your supply before they are sold out!! European Blackberry Jam for sale: United Church Women has received a supply from Linda Butler. There are a variety of sizes and range in price from \$2.00 to \$5.00. They can be purchased through the office by appointment only. Please call 905-884-1301 ext. 5 or email Deb in the office at office@rhuc.org and make arrangements with her. We would like to thank everyone for their continued support. June Blanchette

More opportunities to connect online: As we once again spend more time in our homes, it is important that we don't isolate ourselves. With this in mind, we are considering offering a weekly evening gathering on Zoom like we did last Spring. This would be an opportunity to check in with friends as well as a chance to stay up to date with what is happening at the church. We are also exploring other ways to gather, perhaps for games, for prayer, to discuss the sermon. If any of these possibilities interest you, email James (james@rhuc.org).

LIONA BOYD A Winter Fantasy in Concert with the Richmond Hill United Church Chancel Choir airs on **Monday, December 14 at 10 p.m.** on WNEC.





As we move forward, there are some ongoing tasks where help is needed:

Zoom host: This person launches Zoom each Sunday, lines up videos, makes connections between the various worship leaders, communicates with the camera

operator and helps the service run smoothly in terms of Zoom.

Camera operator: This person operates the phone/camera each Sunday, helps cue the various worship leaders in the sanctuary and communicates with the Zoom host to help the service run smoothly from the sanctuary.

Outreach

Advent Givings: We have chosen four groups with whom we have a long-standing Outreach relationship for Advent givings this year. All four charities are having an unusually difficult year with extra Covid-19 challenges layered over their long-standing issues. Their websites explain their work and how they are addressing these challenges. It is really inspirational to see how resilient and resourceful they are and they make it very clear how and why to donate. We aren't able to get together as a church community or in our families in the usual ways this Christmas but we are able to reach out to these wonderful organizations. Here are the websites for getting in touch:

360kids.ca click on 'ways to give' (located in Richmond Hill) or mail to: 360kids 80F Centurian Drive, Suite #200 Markham, ON L3R 8C1

miotc.ca click on 'donate' (Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold) or mail to (This is a mailing address only): Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold 9251 Yonge Street Suite 8-104 Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 9T3

krasmancentre.com click on 'support' or or mail to: KRASMAN CENTRE 10121 YONGE STREET RICHMOND HILL, ON, L4C 1T7

<https://honouringindigenouspeoples.com/> click on 'Donate' or mail to: - Attention: Julie Dunaiskis, HIP (Honouring Indigenous Peoples), 100 Simcoe St., Suite 110, Toronto, ON M5H 3G2 Tax receipts provided.

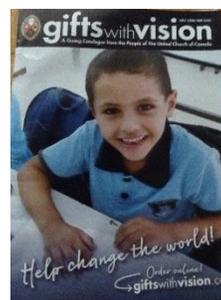
If you would feel more comfortable donating through the church please drop off or mail your gift to the church with notation to Advent Givings clearly stating **one** of the four charities listed above you would like the donation to go to.

If you would like to put together a **new backpack** with toiletries, new socks, scarves, hats and socks please bring to the church during the month of December up until January 15th 2021 for the Krasman Centre.

Lyn May, Outreach



Minute for Mission: Mission & Service-funded global partner the World Student Christian Federation–Africa Region gives university students a place to come together in education, faith, and activism. WSCF-Africa empowers and connects responsible young leaders around the world on their path to change tomorrow. It encourages a culture of democracy to mobilize youth to become proactive in society, promoting positive change through dialogue and action between different traditions and cultures. We are thankful that Mission & Service is in partnership with the World Student Christian Federation and its vision of changing the world for the better.

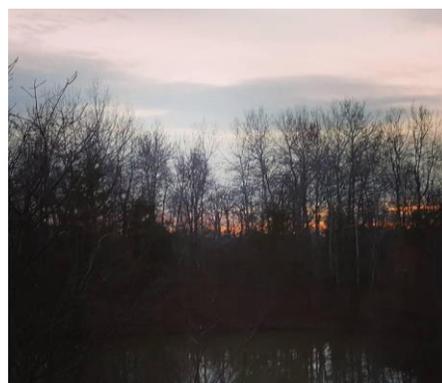


Gifts with Vision: Give meaningful gifts this Christmas that make a difference to the lives of others in the world! Gifts with Vision is a giving catalogue which gives you a glimpse of the breadth of the United Church's Mission and Service ministries and programs. We will be celebrating Christmas 2020 in ways that keep us and others safe so shopping for gifts on line is a good idea, and you don't have

to go through tracking your purchase and hoping that it arrives and is suitable! There are gift ideas suitable for every interest, budget and person. To order, be inspired and learn more visit:

giftswithvision.ca

Donna Smith, 905-884-6307



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