



**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:** We often think of rituals as time tested, traditions passed down from one generation to the next. This is very much the case for rituals within religious traditions, like lighting candles for Hanukkah or celebrating communion and baptism. Sometimes rituals can be brand new. The folks who gathered for the Three Rivers Forest Church meditation walk on Sunday discovered just that. Each person took time to walk quietly in solitude and then came back together and created a ritual to express what we had experienced. We ended up gathering seeds and dried flowers and other signs of hope and new life and nested them together in preparation for a long winter sleep. It was powerful. Rituals are ways in which we embody our beliefs, ideas and feelings. When I lived in Edmonton, I cofounded an LGBTQI+ focused spirituality group and each year we would host a special Pride service. We would create rituals to embody the annual theme for Pride. One year, people wrote the hurtful words that had been said about them onto rice paper and then placed the sheets into the water. There was a sense of release as the papers and the words dissolved. Again, powerful. Rituals are not static, even the time-tested ones. They evolve over time and are adapted given emerging contexts. That was the case for the candlelight vigil for World AIDS Day on Tuesday evening. A group of us from RHUC honoured the tradition of it being held on the steps of the church but most people participated from home via Zoom. You could see everyone's lit candles when you switched to gallery view. As we head towards Christmas there are many of our rituals and traditions that will be celebrated differently this year. Depending on infection numbers, we will likely gather for our Candlelight Communion Service with nearly everyone online. Even if a few people can gather in the church, we will need to adapt how we share the light. But it will still be powerful to kindle light together and sing (or listen to) "Silent Night". The same will be the case for our home celebrations. We will adapt rather than abandon our rituals because rituals connect us to each other and embody who we are. This continues to be a difficult time, but we are resilient. As we mark this festive time, may we celebrate the rituals that we can, adapt what we need to and create some new ones. They will help us navigate this time together.

## worship and music

**Sunday, December 6:** As we pass the halfway mark of "expanded Advent" we reflect on "O Radix" by Malcolm Guite as we light our fourth candle. In John 1:6-8 and 19-28, we once again hear of John the Baptist's ministry, but this time combined with the words of Isaiah 61:1-11 and the promise of one who will come to bring good news to the oppressed. Together they invite us to consider how we experience God's grace in times of sadness as well as joy, how God is present through what is hidden as much as what is known.

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

James' video to children:

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!AlBjmozEVDR0gZ8fiwpoi7eONGjxxw>

**Sunday, December 13:** As we light our fifth candle, we reflect on another of the "O Antiphons" in the poem "O Clavis" by Malcolm Guite. As we turn to 2 Samuel 7:1-16 and Luke 1:26-38, we also turn from the story of John the Baptist and references to the coming "advent" of an adult Jesus, to the story of Mary and her acceptance of becoming the mother of Jesus.

**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 and Isaiah 9:2-7.



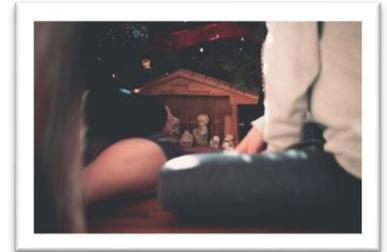
**Christmas Eve, December 24:** This year there will be three opportunities (dependent on infection numbers) to celebrate Christmas.

**5:45 pm - A Contemplative "Open House":** This "drop in" prayer service is an opportunity for people to stop by in the sanctuary for a short time of prayer and reflection. Readings offered between reflective Christmas songs. People can stay for 5 minutes or the whole hour for quiet prayer.

**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.

**Worship Notes:** You may have noticed while logging in through Zoom that this year's manger scene is set in front of the Christmas tree. You may have also noticed that so far there are only some of the characters present - just the angel and the animals, and this coming Sunday the shepherds. There is a practical reason for this. Each week's "Learning Together Video" and the Discovery Time Activity that parents lead at home are focused on a different character in the story of Jesus' birth. This progressive approach also reminds us that the Season of Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas rather than a celebration of Christmas itself, which begins at Christmas Eve and runs until Epiphany on January 6. Bringing out a few characters at a time heightens our anticipation until finally on Christmas Eve we place into the nativity scene the figurine of the infant Jesus lying in the manger.



**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](mailto: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

**Shalom Seekers:** On Monday Dec 7th on Zoom at 10am, we will be discussing chapter 7 of Barbara Brown Taylor's book "*Holy Envy. Finding faith in the faith of Others.*" Taylor, in this book, shares her experience of teaching Religion 101 to college students and how that helped her find her own faith again. Chapter 7 called "*The Shadow Bearers*" is focussed on Islam and offers some thoughts about how ordinary Muslims are "shadow bearers" for those few who act radically.

Invitations to the Zoom meeting are sent out on Sunday afternoon. Newcomers are always welcome. Please contact Peg Hiscoke or Sandra Loughton if you would like to join us at 10am on Dec 7th. Please note that our meeting on Dec 14 will be our last this year and will be a Christmas party on Zoom at 10am.

**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

**Congratulations to Julie Miller** on winning the Richmond Hill Sports Champion 2020 – Baton Twirling!

**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.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:james@rhuc.org)).



### 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



**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.

### FINAL PEAK, FINAL CLIMB supporting AFRICAN FAMILIES IMPACTED WITH AIDS!

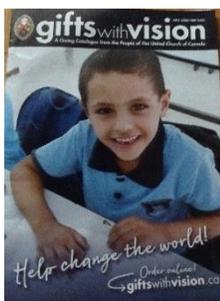


**HURRAH, we did it!!** As of World AIDS Day, Dec 1, our HANDS AND HEARTS FOR AFRICA WALKING TEAM climbed its final mountain in this year's '2020 Virtual Walk Up Mountains'. Our group of intrepid walkers has walked through falling leaves, rain, sleet and snowstorm, dedicating our mileage to support the human rights and community-based work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. During our 7 weeks of walking, we have climbed six mountains and covered a total of 2372.98 kms or 1476.96 miles. Well done to our walkers!

In this year of double pandemic (HIV/Aids and Covid), we ask you to consider a donation to the Stephen Lewis Foundation at [www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org) or by mail to Suite 100, 260 Spadina Avenue, Toronto, ON M5T2E4. Together we can make a difference in the lives of African families!

### Get into that holiday spirit by decorating your house or business and help light up Richmond Hill.

- This is the year to pull out all the stops and dazzle your neighbours.
- Submissions due by Friday, December 11 at 4:30 p.m.
- Visit [RichmondHill.ca/StayHome](http://RichmondHill.ca/StayHome)



**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](http://giftswithvision.ca)  
Donna Smith, 905-884-6307

This year **Holidays at the David Dunlop Observatory** will offer festivities and stories from Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza, and many more traditions. Registration is per family and the deadline to register is Wednesday December 16 at 12pm. A link to the virtual program will be provided in a separate email prior to the start of the event. Fee: \$22.60 Click [HERE](#) to register

**From Rev. Cameron Trimble:** "A couple of years ago, I went to go hear Anne Lamott host a book reading of her book, *Stitches: A Handbook on Meaning, Hope and Repair*. She wrote it after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings, in an attempt to make sense of such a senseless tragedy. One of my favorite lines from the book is, "There can be meaning without things making sense." The woman who introduced her said that reading Anne Lamott was like tasting "literary wasabi." What a beautiful way to put it. At the reading, Anne chose to read to us about her definition of hope. She read:

*"Every time we choose the good action or response, the descent, the valuable, it builds, incrementally, to renewal, resurrection, the place of newness, freedom, justice. The equation is: life, death, resurrection, hope. The horror is real, and so you make casseroles for your neighbor, organize an overseas clothing drive, and do your laundry. You can also offer to do other people's laundry, if they have recently had any random babies or surgeries.*

*We live stitch by stitch, when were lucky. If you fixate on the big picture, the whole shebang, the overview, you miss the stitching. And maybe the stitching is crude, or is unraveling, but if it was precise, we'd pretend that life is just fine and running like a Swiss watch. This is not helpful if on the inside our understanding is that life is more often the cuckoo clock with rusty gears.*

*My pastor, Veronica, one Sunday told the story of a sparrow lying in the street with its legs straight up in the air, sweating a little under its feathery arms. A warhorse walks up to the bird and asks, 'What on earth are you doing?' The spirit replies, 'I heard the sky was falling, and I wanted to help.' The horse laughs a big, loud, sneering horse laugh, and says, 'do you really think you are going to hold back the sky, with those scrawny little legs?' And the sparrow says, 'One does what one can.'"*

What a great definition of hope: **being open to doing what one can and trusting God to do the rest.**

I want to be clear about this: I believe is that God longs to break into each of our well-protected lives to teach us about hope, love, joy and peace – right now.

If anything, **Advent is the time we must wake up to live in the present** – to live the life God has given us right now. Refuse to live yesterday over and over again. Resist the temptation to save your best self for tomorrow. Do not put off living the kind of life you meant to live."

To unsubscribe, please write to: [office@rhuc.org](mailto:office@rhuc.org), and put "unsubscribe" in the subject line. Published by Deb Fratin. Please submit notices by noon on Wednesday.