

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 Hymns](#)

We understand that this is a strange time, but we will get through it together. We are still one community, committed to care for one another with compassion and love.

Minister's Message As I shared last week, it is my intention over these next few weeks to reflect on each of the nine intentions in our Mission Action Plan. The first is to "be a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity". This intention names a significant aspect of our identity as a community of faith, formalized when we became an Affirming Ministry in 2013 and named each Sunday as we light the rainbow candle on our communion table. You would think that the pandemic would have been a barrier to living this out, but we have continued to express the value of belonging in a number of ways this past year.

The first potential barrier turned bridge is our decision to use Zoom as a platform for virtual worship services. The idea of continuing to come together in real time was important to us as was ensuring that worship would not shift to a one person show. Zoom has made this possible, even to have leadership across an ocean. We will not soon forget the Ramsaran family lighting Advent candles across two continents. This highlights how services via Zoom have been a way for us to stay connected beyond the physical building. Ironically, the building at times is more of a barrier than a bridge. The acoustics in the Fellowship Hall have often been named as a hindrance to conversation. We may not be sharing tea or coffee, but the Breakout Room feature on Zoom has helped us get together to chat. The fact we're placed randomly into the "rooms" has given us a chance to get to know more people than if we self-selected. And despite the pandemic, there are a number of new people, plus old friends, who have connected to RHUC in recent months. I worried that the virtual format of being together meant they wouldn't receive the warmth and welcome for which we pride ourselves, but they assure me how much they feel a part of the RHUC family.

Beyond welcome, this year we have also been able to keep celebrating diversity. Audio-visual capability meant that we could celebrate Pentecost in multiple languages while projecting readings in English. This possibility has highlighted the power of being able to pray and reflect in your "mother tongue". In the future I hope we can do more in this regard, where possible presenting non-scriptural readings in the original rather than translation. We can always do more and so I am grateful that Julia is focusing on intercultural ministry in her time with us as a student minister. One very important project is her facilitation of the Anti-racism Working Group. This group will help us name ways we can create a safer space for all in terms of racial and ethnic identity, removing possible barriers and fostering genuine inclusion.

As the pandemic has dragged on, I would have thought that our isolation would hinder our ability to be a welcoming community that respects diversity and yet we have found ways to do just the opposite. It highlights how important this intention is for us and our commitment to cultivate this value moving forward.

worship and music

[Order of service](#) [Hymns](#) [Discovery Time at home](#)

James' video to

children: https://1drv.ms/u/s!AIBjmozEVDROgaRLFZWUoZ5GYZf_A

Sunday, February 28: As we celebrate the Second Sunday in Lent, we reflect on John 2:13-22 (when Jesus drives the moneychangers out of the Temple), 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (in which the author reflects on the apparent foolishness of the cross) and an excerpt from James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (highlighting the connection between the cross and Jesus' solidarity with those facing oppression).

Sunday, March 7: For this Third Sunday in Lent, we reflect on John 3:14-21, known mostly for one verse, "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16), and Ephesians 2:1-10 (about how we participate in the resurrection of Christ).

Sunday, March 14: On this Fourth Sunday in Lent, we jump ahead in John to chapter 8, verses 21 to 36. We also reflect on Romans 4:13-25.

Sunday, March 21: On this last Sunday before Holy Week, we reflect on John 12:20-33 and Hebrews 5:5-10.

Worship Notes: We may be out of lockdown in York Region, but we are still in the highest tier of restrictions, meaning that as we look ahead to the end of March and the celebration of Holy Week, we anticipate ongoing virtual services for this most holy time of the year. Worshipping via Zoom doesn't mean we can't be creative though. With this in mind, we would like to put together a photo-based palm parade. When the people welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, they did so cutting down branches from the local area. They waved them and placed them on the road. We invite you to do something similar and take a picture or video of yourself(ves) holding a branch from our local area. You may want to go outside and cut a small spruce or cedar bough. If it is warm enough for pussy willows, you could cut a few of branches (this is what they use in the Ukraine instead of palm branches). If you prefer, stay indoors and take a photo with a houseplant. Alternatively, think of other items that express a celebratory welcome: waving ribbons, streamers, "ticker-tape" and the like. Please send to james@rhuc.org by March 25 so that they can be compiled into a "parade".

Learn about Birding with Three Rivers Forest Church:

Each February, the activity for Three Rivers Forest Church is an opportunity to learn something about nature. This year we have the opportunity to learn about birds and the hobby of birding. We will gather on **Zoom at 3:00 pm, Sunday February 28.**



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

Shalom Seekers: On Monday March 1 at 10am on Zoom, Shalom Seekers will be continuing our Lenten Study "Lifting up Scripture through Art." This series hopes to show how art in its many forms can deepen our understanding of scripture. Lectionary readings we focus on in Shalom for March 1st are Gen. 9: 8-17, Gen 17: 1-7, 15-16, Romans 4: 13-25. Anyone is welcome to join us for this Lenten series. For more information, contact Peg Hiscoke or Sandra Loughton.

Prayer Shawl knitting and crocheting will meet on Zoom and visit that way while we work on our Prayer Shawl on **Wednesday's, February 17 through to March 31 from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.** We have given out many of those made during Lent last year to those who are grieving the death of a loved one or those who are baptized or join our congregation or to those people who move to another community. They are a way of showing people they are being thought of during a time of sadness or celebration. Yarn, needles and hooks are available. Phone Donna Smith, 905-884-6307 for information, and to get the Zoom link.



RHUC Book Club

On Wednesday, **March 31st** please join us on Zoom at 4 p.m. to discuss ***Recipe for a Perfect Wife*** by Karma Brown. (Please note the change from March 24th listed last week in Reflections.) Brown's novel is set in two different time periods -- the 1950's and modern day. A new homeowner finds notes left in the basement in cookbooks from a previous owner of the house. A somewhat dark and mysterious, but very readable tale! Karma Brown lives in Oakville, Ontario and has published five books to date.

For more information about the RHUC Book Club, please speak to Sandra Loughton, Facilitator. New members are always welcome. The invitation and link to the Zoom meeting will be sent out the day prior to the meeting. We hope you can join us via video or telephone!

HAIR: HAIR (Heretics, Agnostics, Infidels and Other Riffraff), is on **Monday evenings at 7:00 pm over Zoom.** This group intends to be a place of inquiry and questioning, where doubts are expressed, uncertainties about our faith and its relevance to our daily lives clarified, and the application of the teachings and principles of our Christian faith to major issues of our time are explored, and where we have interesting and stimulating discussions. This year we are using videos of TED talks to launch discussion and have dealt with such topics as environmentalism and climate change, racism and social justice, ethics and values, science and religion, and healthy ageing. These discussions are open to anyone interested, and new members are always welcome. To get the Zoom link please contact David Leyton-Brown at dlbrown@yorku.ca.

Lenten Book Study: March 4: "deep breath (may)" and "honoured group (june)" in *TSWI*, and Chapter 3, "Tightening Control" in *21*

Two opportunities for Centering Prayer: This Zoom-based group will meet **Mondays at 12:30** for a simple format with a 20-minute silent sit. **Wednesdays at 6:30 pm** is a reflective format with readings, Taizé style refrains as well as a discussion time after the 20-minute sit. Contact James (james@rhuc.org) for Zoom links to both prayer times

Pub Theology: Friday, February 26 at 7:30 PM on Zoom: It is time to come together again to talk about faith, spirituality and life's big questions, all over the beverage of your choice. Let James know if you would like to participate and he will send you the Zoom link. Feel free to invite a friend.

World Day of Prayer 2021 – Build on a Strong

Foundation: The World Day of Prayer is a prayer movement that invites us to enrich our faith experience with the experience of Christians from other countries and cultures and to bring hope to women touched by injustice. This year's service was written by the World Day of Prayer Committee of Vanuatu.

This yearly prayer service is also a fundraiser for the WICC. Please consider donating so that the WICC can continue to fund their grant programs. Thank you for your support.

ON-LINE SERVICE: Go to wicc.org & select the button labelled "One Hour Service Video" or follow the link below ...
<https://wicc.org/one-hour-world-day-of-prayer-service-available-on-video/>

church news

SAVE THE DATES

March 7, 2021 at 12:30 – Congregational Update (on Zoom)

- 2020 Financial Statement
- Progress re work with SHS Consulting re-development of Village Commons (former CD Building)
- AV Project

April 11, 2021 Leadership and Congregational

Development Forum (on Zoom Time to be confirmed. More details to follow.)

Sunday May 2nd, 2021 - Annual General Meeting (on Zoom)

- time to be confirmed

MISSION ACTION PLAN Minute

Annual Reports: We are also trying something different with our Annual Reports for an unforgettable 2020 that has pushed us in all sorts of new directions. The Board felt we can take the opportunity to really reflect on how we have adapted our life as a faith community this past year and frame it in the context of our 9 intentions from our Mission Action Plan that was approved by the congregation in April 2018.

This means we are inviting all committees/groups who normally submit reports to consider their collective work this year and pick one or more of the nine intentions to answer the following question:

In 2020, how have we (committee, group etc.) contributed to RHUC meet our commitments to:

1. Be a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity
2. Engage with the community in our neighbourhood
3. Ensure our facilities align with our values, identity and purpose
4. Develop intentional opportunities for people to gather to build relationships, nourish spiritual wellness and engage in justice
5. Create dynamic, engaging and meaningful worship
6. Reach out with care to people at all stages of life
7. Communicate our story both within and beyond the congregation
8. Be good stewards of our finances and facilities
9. Foster and Value Leaders and Volunteers

The reports do not have to be long. We are trying to get a sense of our collective efforts and how they are contributing to the goals we set for ourselves as part of the Mission Action Plan. The pandemic has changed many things, but also The reports do not have to be long. We are trying to get a sense of our collective efforts and how they are contributing to the goals we set for ourselves as part of the Mission Action Plan. The pandemic has changed many things, but also created opportunities for new ways of being church. We think there is a great story to tell!

NEW OPPORTUNITY: We are also extending an opportunity to anyone in the congregation to reflect on what you or your family has been doing this year that could fit into our MAP intentions. Or, if you have experienced something as a result of people part of this community or been impacted by someone in our congregation. Our faith and being part of RHUC informs our day-to-day lives, not just what we do as part of RHUC. We encourage you to think of a couple of sentences that help tell the story of anything you would like to share that speaks to one of the 9 intentions above.

Please forward reports and other contributions to office@rhuc.org by March 19th, 2021. If you have any questions, please contact Jane Wedlock at jane.wedlock2@gmail.com.

A Word from the Nominations Committee: It is that time of year when we recruit people for roles on the Church Board, and our various committees and teams. Our Nominations Committee is discerning how best to fill present and upcoming vacancies. You are invited to ponder where you may feel called to share your gifts at RHUC. The Nominations Committee is looking to fill the following roles:

1. **Vice-Chair of the Church Board**
2. **Forum Facilitator for Mission, Outreach & Social Action**
3. **Chair of the Family Ministry Committee**
4. **Members of the Finance Committee**

If you have questions about the above positions or need help in your own discernment regarding where you may want to share your gifts at RHUC, the members of the Nominations Committee are happy to assist you. Simply contact one of the following committee members: Kathleen Crosbie (kltcrosbie 'at' gmail.com); Donna Harrison (donna115 'at' sympatico.ca) Donna Smith (donnasmith44 'at' rogers.com); and Doug Loweth (loweth 'at' sympatico.ca)

Finance Committee: We would like to acknowledge with thanks the increased contributions in December. It helped a great deal given the drastic fall in rentals during the year.

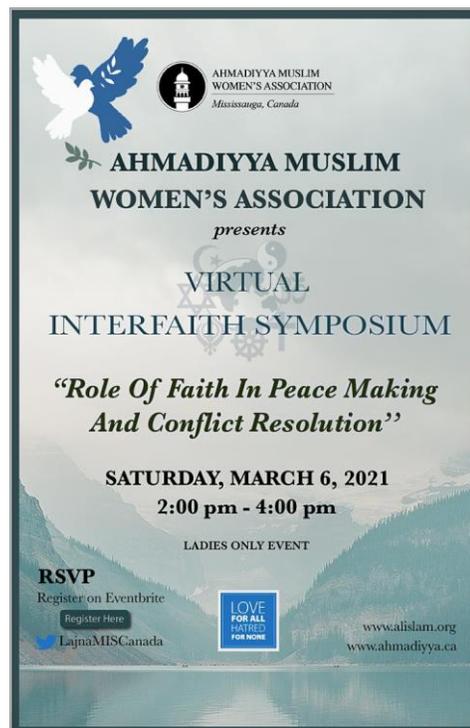
outreach

Out of the Cold This year's (virtual) Out of the Cold fundraising walk-a-thon has been a huge success in our area, raising the most money of the 140-ish groups in Canada. We passed the goal of \$80,000 and raised it by 199% to a total of \$159,325 and counting! A wonderful outcome showing our community cares for others and especially during this past year of the pandemic with so many changes having to be made to meet the needs of the homeless. Mosaic Interfaith has not been able to have as many people stay overnight in shelters because of social distancing and all food served, dinner, breakfast and bag lunch for each overnight person, has had to be catered. During the day, the homeless are out in the street for the day, doing the best to survive, till the shelters open again late afternoon. Thanks to all who donated and showed support.

community news

Rainbow Space events for February 2021:
<https://mailchi.mp/2886ca416f5a/ixdtvcnzpc-5394710>

Needing a home: Would you like to have two parakeets live in your home? A young woman in our community is moving and needs to find a home for her feathered friends. Contact Donna Smith for the contact information, 905-884-6307



lifting our spirits

This is a section for poems, reflections, recipes, uplifting news items, anything to help us get through this, and to do it together. Please submit items to help us all "lift our spirits". Email Deb at office@rhuc.org.

Wearing a Mask

A Prayer from the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, Rev. Richard Bott

Creator God, as I prepare to go into the world, help me see the holy nature of wearing this face covering.
 Let it be a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbours- as I seek also to love myself.
 Since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes.
 Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly not only with my words, but with my actions.
 Holy Spirit, as I secure this mask around my ears remind me to listen carefully and caringly to all those I meet.
 May this simple face covering be shield and banner and may each breath it holds be filled with your love. Amen

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