



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, I've been watching the BBC version of "Les Misérables". I have been especially struck by the portrayal throughout the miniseries of the great divide between the poor, and the bourgeoisie and those with still greater wealth. The attitude of many with wealth seems to be that the state of others is fixed, that they are poor because there is something wrong with them. This view is not just a 19th century Parisian issue but something we continue to wrestle with as a society.

A big part of the main plot, as many of you know, is the pursuit of Jean Valjean by Inspector Javert. When the city is about to erupt into an uprising, he is more concerned with capturing his nemesis than bringing calm, even convinced that doing so will quell the unrest because "if there is any sort of trouble, Valjean is sure to be at the centre of it." He is obsessed with his perception of Valjean even though it should be clear when Valjean turns himself in so that an innocent man is not condemned that he is not the evil man that haunts Javert.

This plot point, plus several subpoints, highlights a further question to whether or not some are fixed in their social status but asks whether or not people are "evil" by nature. Javert thinks so even after witnessing Valjean's compassion and kindness time and again. It is clear in the story that circumstances are what drive behaviour. I referenced this last week in how Fantine only became a prostitute through the assumptions and therefore the actions of others, generally of those with higher status or privilege. The privileged, especially men, are the true villains of this story, perpetuating conditions that lead others to do the very things they assume are the things that poor people do.

As we begin African History Month, I'm struck how these assumptions continue to plague us, racism founded on the belief that a whole group of people are "bad". Proponents of slavery argued it helped "civilize" African peoples, but it was the ingenuity of these same people that helped plantations, and their owners, succeed. Emancipated slaves were often forced to continue to work for their former owners as "apprentices". Promises of land and tools to establish their own farms were overturned and too often when, in spite of this, people became successful, whole communities were terrorized to keep them "in their place". Intergenerational poverty is pointed to as proof of some moral failing. This in turn become justification for higher rates of policing and the violence that has come with it. We often assume things were better in Canada but there were chapters of the KKK out West. The story of Viola Desmond is a reminder that segregationist policies were commonplace in Canada. This summer's "Black Lives Matter" protests in Canada are a reminder that racism still flourishes here.

The prejudice that keeps white supremacy alive is based on the fundamental lie that some people are "evil" by nature. My faith tells me the exact opposite. It is the systems that limit people's opportunities that are "evil". This is one of the fundamental messages of Jesus. We are all good at our core, and it is the responsibility of all of us to nurture the conditions that make it possible for everyone to thrive, both through policies that bring about greater equity, and through one-on-one conversations that help to shift racist attitudes. We need to seek structural change in our society, but hearts also need to be changed.

worship and music

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

James' video to children: <https://1drv.ms/u/s!AIBjmozEVDROgaMfPNa6kLpDcYrpw>

Sunday, February 7: As we mark another Ember Day as well as begin Black History Month, we take time to focus on the need to be good stewards of creation, especially given the unequal impacts of resource extraction in regard to communities of colour. In *@From Locusts to Eagles*", James will reflect on both Isaiah 40:21-31 and Joy Cowley's "Smallness" from *Aotearoa Psalms*.

Sunday, February 14 is Communion: Be advised that we will be sharing in a virtual communion. For this, participants need to have bread and juice/wine (or other suitable food and drink) ready before the service begins. We eat the bread and drink the juice/wine from our remote locations at the same time as the worship leader. You are also reminded that permission to share communion in this way is given only for when you are participating in real time. This is why communion is edited out of the videos posted on Facebook and on YouTube.

We mark the last Sunday before Lent with a reflection on Mark's version of the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-9). Ian Wilgus will be our guest preacher. We also share communion virtually so please have bread and grape juice (or wine) on hand to share at home.

Wednesday, February 17: We begin the Season of Lent with a virtual gathering for **Ash Wednesday. We will gather via Zoom at 7:15 pm** following a shortened Meditation time (beginning at 6:30 pm).

Lent 2021: The readings throughout Lent this year are focussed on the significance of the cross, each week highlighting the emotions and values which not only motivated Jesus in his ministry, but which shape our own approach to this pivotal symbol of Christianity. On the **First Sunday of Lent (February 21)**, we look at John 15: 9-17, where Jesus professes that no one has greater love than to lay down their lives for their friends.

Using Chat During Worship: As previously noted, worshipping via "Zoom" gives people the opportunity to "chat", a feature that some people appreciate while others find it distracting. Being a community means trying to find ways to understand each other and to make space for one another's preferences. With this in mind, the Worship Committee propose that we greet one another using the chat feature at the beginning of the service and reserve the feature during the service to either alert those running the broadcast of technical issues or to raise a specific concern. Then at the end of the service we can return to more open-ended conversation.

Worship Notes: This past week was the first day of Black History Month in both Canada and the US. This is a time to celebrate the histories and cultures of Africa and the African Diaspora, including during worship. We do this in large part to redress the imbalance in how history tends to be told, highlighting the accomplishments of white people at the expense of others. Given the ongoing reality of systemic racism, celebrating accomplishments only tells part of the story. We also need to name ongoing struggles. With this in mind, we want to mark this important month in our prayer and preaching, in song choices and resources for children. We do so balancing other aspects of worship, including the beginning of Lent on February 21. Marking this month is not without controversy. As is the case with other heritage and history months, we need to be cautious not to relegate the experiences of Black Canadians to February alone. Ultimately, Canadian history is Black history, Indigenous history, women's history, LGBTQ+ history. To celebrate Canadian heritage includes celebrating Asian, Islamic, Jewish and Latin American heritage. We lift up individual peoples and cultures as an invitation to learn from one another and to celebrate who we are together.



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 February 8th** at 10 a.m., on our Zoom meeting, we will gather to discuss the last chapter of Barbara Brown Taylor's book *Holy Envy Finding God in the Faith of Others*. In the Epilogue we will celebrate the wit and wisdom of this well-known theologian who shares with us her thoughts. As she says herself, "disowning God has been a great help to her" and "the only clear line she draws these days is this--When religion tries to come between her and her neighbour, she chooses to love her neighbour because Jesus did not command us to love our religion." If you are interested in joining us, our Zoom meetings are open to newcomers. As well as some notes provided beforehand, we will be providing a link to an online sermon by BBT focussed on her book. For further questions, please speak to Sandra Loughton or Peg Hiscoke.

Lenten Book Study: Rev. James Ravenscroft is offering a Lenten Book Study which will take place on Zoom (or via telephone) on Thursdays from 7 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. from February 18 through to March 25. We will be reading and discussing in tandem *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power* by Desmond Cole AND *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality* by Bob Joseph.

Below is a schedule of the dates with their accompanying chapters:

February 18: "negro frolics (january)" and "zero tolerance (february)" in *The Skin We're In (TSWI)*, and Chapter 1, "The Beginning" in *21 Things (21)*

February 25: "justice for abdirahman (march)" and "direct action (april)" in *TSWI*, and Chapter 2, "Resistance is Futile" in *21*

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

March 11: "the unsettling (july)" and "here for dafonte (august)" in *TSWI*, and Chapter 4, "They Rose Against Us" in *21*

March 18: "uncontrolled movement (september)" and "women of exceptional merit (october)" in *TSWI*, and Chapter 5, "And Its Days Are Numbered" in *21*

March 25: "community policing (november)", "competing interests (december)" and "abdoul and fatouma (january)" in *TSWI*, and Chapter 6, "If Not the Indian Act, Then What?" and Chapter 7, "Looking Forward to a Better Canada" in *21*

This study will be a way for us to explore the reality of systemic racism in Canada.



RHUC Book Club: Please join us on **Wednesday, February 24th at 4 p.m.** on Zoom or by telephone to discuss the novel *The Home for Unwanted Girls* by Canadian writer, Joanna Goodman. This is a heart-wrenching, gripping story of a mother-daughter bond that could not be broken and it was inspired by true events.

On **Wednesday, March 24th** please join us again on Zoom at 4 p.m. to discuss *Recipe for a Perfect Wife* by Karma Brown. Brown's novel is set in two different time periods -- the 1950's and in modern day. A new homeowner finds notes left in the basement in cookbooks from the previous owner of the house. A somewhat dark and mysterious, but very readable tale!

For more information about the RHUC Book Club, please speak to Sandra Loughton, Facilitator. New members are always welcome.

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

HAIR: Our Monday-evening study group, HAIR (Heretics, Agnostics, Infidels and Other Riffraff), will resume **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.

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.

church news

Staff: Due to the province wide shut-down, James and Deb are now work remotely from home. James can be reached via cell at 647-705-2754 or email at james@rhuc.org. Email Deb at office@rhuc.org or phone message at 905-884-1301 ext. 5.

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: This person assists the chair of the church board in their role, chairing meetings as requested. This person also assists the lead of the Volunteer Animation Team in the Nominations process. The Vice-Chair succeeds the Chair of the Church Board at the end of their term.

2. Forum Facilitators: Worship, Music & Spiritual Formation, and Mission, Outreach & Social Action: Forum Facilitators may seem like a new role at RHUC, but they are based on the model used by Outreach. In addition to convening a gathering of committees and groups to see what projects they have planned and to look at new possibilities for the coming year, the Chair of Outreach is part of the Board, bringing a social/ecological perspective to its work.

The overall ministry of RHUC is divided into three areas:

A. Worship, Music & Spiritual Formation; B. Mission, Outreach & Social Action; and C. Leadership & Congregational

Development. Based on the above, the responsibilities of Forum Facilitators are to:

- sit on the Board to bring the perspective of their ascribed area of church life to its work and to relay any concerns the various groups within that grouping may have;
- convene, twice a year, meetings with members of associated committees, teams, groups, and other interested people, to discuss goals, projects and events that contribute to our ministry;
- invite the committees and groups that are part of their area of church life to discern what their upcoming needs might be and to submit budgets to the Finance Committee.

We are looking for Forum Facilitators for Worship, Music & Spiritual Formation and for Mission, Outreach & Social Action.

Listed below are the committees, teams and projects that fall within their particular aspect of life at RHUC:

A. Worship, Music & Spiritual Formation

- Sunday Morning Worship and Music
 - worship committee
 - ushers and greeters
 - sound system and technology team
 - sanctuary decoration
 - choirs and djembe drummers
- Christian Development
 - Family Ministry (children & youth)
 - Adult Study Groups (Shalom Seekers, HAIR, Book Club, Faith Exploration)
- Spirituality and Wellness
 - Women's Spirituality
 - Meditation
 - Forest Church

B. Mission, Outreach & Social Action:

- Committees
 - Net Zero
 - Living into Right Relations
 - Hands and Hearts for Africa
- Projects and Concerns
 - Krasman Lunches
 - 360 Kids
 - Breakfast Club
 - Food Bank
 - Refugees
 - Mission and Service Fund

The Forum Facilitator for Leadership & Congregational

Development is DJ McCready. The following committees, teams and activities comprise this area of church life: UCW, Volunteer Animation Team, Nominations Process, the Generous Spirit Campaign, Coffee Teams, Men's Breakfast, Vision-Keepers, Lay Pastoral Visitors, Prayer Shawl Ministry and the Phone Tree

3. Chair of the Family Ministry Committee:

Formerly the CD Committee which included oversight of adult study groups, this committee:

- coordinates programs for youth and children (including recruitment and training of leaders);
- plans family-friendly, intergenerational events;
- discerns ways to offer support to families in the congregation;
- and ensures there are regular opportunities for the reaffirmation baptism (confirmation).

4. We are seeking members of the Finance Committee. This Committee has general responsibility for the oversight of financial expenditures along with the coordination of the annual budget.

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 (donna115 'at' rogers.com); and Doug Loweth (loweth 'at' sympatico.ca)

outreach

Out of the Cold: RHUC has a long connection with the homeless in our community having supported the Out of the Cold program since the beginning in 2005 and more recently our partnership with the Krasman Centre. These agencies have had to change their programs this past year because of the pandemic, costing more money to serve their clients and with health restrictions, they cannot have as many homeless people stay inside overnight - that's a hard statement to read: homeless people are staying outside during these cold winter nights. We can help the Out of the Cold's annual fundraiser by supporting those teams who are looking for sponsors as they walk or directly to the organization. Go to cnoy.org/richmondhill to donate and learn more. If you would like to support one of the teams, we suggest "Connecting the Community" another organization we support, or to our area's organizer "Mosaic". Your donation is most important to assist people in need of shelter overnight.

community news

Richmond Hill Winter Carnival: <http://www.wintercarnival.net/>

Rainbow Space events for February 2021:

<https://mailchi.mp/2886ca416f5a/ixdtvcnzpc-5394710>

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