



### 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:** On Wednesday, like many others in the congregation I'm sure, I paused from work to turn on the Inauguration ceremony. I didn't catch all of it but turned the TV on in time to hear now-President Biden offer his inaugural address. I may not be an American, but his words really moved me at several points. But as much as I appreciated his words, his address was not the highlight. That for me was the concluding poem delivered by Amanda Gorman, National Youth Poet Laureate. Her words, even more than President Biden's spoke across nations, even though they were very much directed to her own.

I would like to quote a portion: "...we are far from polished/ far from pristine/ but that doesn't mean we are/ striving to form a union that is perfect. / We are striving to forge a union with purpose/ To compose a country committed to all cultures, colours, characters and conditions of man/ And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us/ but what stands before us." Those words capture for me the name of her poem, "The Hill We Climb".

Her words remind us that what is essential in our lives is not perfection but purpose. And there is plenty of purpose we face globally. President Trump may now be at Mar-a-Lago, but there is still a threat from right wing populism around the world. The spectre of white supremacist sentiment is not only an American issue. The global nature of the Black Lives Matter movement reminds us that we have a collective history of systemic racism that needs to be confronted and ongoing colonialist ideology that needs to be deconstructed. The US may be rejoicing the Paris Climate Accord but there is much work to be done by all of us if we are to avoid climate catastrophe. There are humanitarian crises, not the least of which is the ongoing pandemic. But if we shoulder these and many other issues together, then together we will echo what she also said: "That even as we grieved, we grew/ That even as we hurt, we hoped/ That even as we tired, we tried."

For me, those words are key. As a follower of Jesus, I believe that his ministry was primarily a call to collective purpose. His early followers believed that he must be returning soon because the expected new age of justice and peace did not miraculously appear but rather was ever on the horizon. Now we realize that the "kingdom" he ushered in was never going to be complete. Instead, it is an intergenerational process that calls each of us to hope, to grow, to never stop trying. As Ms. Gorman rightly says, we are grieving, hurt and tired, but as long as we have a purpose before us, we will climb the hill of a better tomorrow, and do it together.

## worship and music

**Sunday, January 24:** In Mark 1:14-20, we hear the familiar calling of the four fishers, Simon, Andrew, James and John who leave everything behind to follow Jesus. We also reflect on an excerpt from Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue's book **I Keep the land Alive**. In "A Time of Transition", James reflects on how Jesus' ministry picks up from where John the Baptist's leaves off, and how we each are called to continue on from where Jesus left off, each in the context of our own lives and circumstances. [Order of service](#) [Hymns](#)

[Discovery Time at home](#)

James' video to children: <https://1drv.ms/v/s!AlBjmozEVDROgaIpsk2Td5WDkSA-Zg>

**Sunday, January 31:** Jesus turns his attention from calling disciples to his ministry of healing as he liberates someone from the power of an unclean spirit (Mark 1:21-28). Julia Ye, our student minister, is preaching.

**Sunday, February 7:** We mark another Ember Day and take time to focus on the gift of creation and the importance of tackling the climate crisis.

**Sunday, February 14:** We celebrate the last Sunday before Lent with a reflection on Mark 9:2-9, mark's version of the Transfiguration of Jesus. Ian Wilgus will be our guest preacher. We also share communion virtually.

**Worship Notes:** Traditionally, a worship service includes a variety of readings, generally four: a reading from Torah or the prophets, a psalm, an epistle and then a gospel passage. At RHUC we may not hear all four, but in recent years we do reflect on them in a number of ways. The children's lesson is sometimes based on the Torah/Prophets reading. The theme of the epistle is often the inspiration for the non-scriptural selection and the psalm is the foundation for the "Call to Worship". The psalm is appropriately used in this way, each psalm being a prayer or more rightly a song. Hymns too are often inspired by scripture, even quoting from it directly. In these many ways we have a chance to reflect on the wisdom that the bible has to offer.



**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

**Three Rivers Forest Church:** This month's gathering will be a combination of individual practice and a Zoom-based group on **Sunday, January 24 at 3 p.m.** Participants are asked to take some time to go for a meditative walk and to gather found natural objects that they can then use to create an image that reminds them of the sun, late January being the time when we begin to notice how the days are in fact getting longer. This time of year, is also associated with creativity. Participants are asked to take a picture of their creation so that they may share it with the group. Please contact James ([james@rhuc.org](mailto:james@rhuc.org)) for the Zoom link as well as for additional information.

**Shalom Seekers:** On **Monday, January 25** Shalom Seekers will meet on **Zoom at 10 am.** We will discuss Chapter 11 of Barbara Brown Taylor's book "Holy Envy". This week's chapter has the intriguing title "The God We Didn't Make Up."

If you would like to join the discussion, please contact Peg Hiscoke or Sandra Loughton. Notes and reflection questions are provided ahead of our meeting.

**\*\*\*NEW\*\*\*LENTEN BOOK STUDY:** New Year's Day is barely behind us and Lent is approaching! 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. on the following six dates: February 18 and 25, March 4, 11, 18 and 25.**

The two books we'll be reading and discussing in tandem are *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. Specific chapters from the two books will be assigned for each session. This study will be a way for us to explore the reality of systemic racism in Canada.

For a synopsis of the two books, please refer to last week's edition of Reflections.

If you're interested in taking part in this Lenten Study, please let Sandra Loughton know as soon as possible in order to register and whether you'd like to purchase copies of one or both books. The approximate cost of the books factoring in Sandra's 10% discount: **The Skin We're In** (hardcover) \$22.50 plus tax and **21 Things** . . . (paperback) \$14.63 plus tax.

The **deadline** for the group order for the books is **Wednesday, January 27th**. Payment can be made when picking up the books by cash, cheque or by e-transfer to Sandra at any time after ordering. Please contact Sandra at: [bookgirl8@hotmail.com](mailto:bookgirl8@hotmail.com) or by telephone at 905.773.5189 to **register for the book study and to order your books**. You will be notified when the books come in and we'll arrange the best way to distribute them. We hope you can join us!



**RHUC Book Club:** Please join us on Zoom on **Wednesday, January 27 at 4 p.m.** to discuss the novel **AMERICAN DIRT** by Jeanine Cummins. The Zoom invitation will be sent out the day before the meeting. For more information about the book club, please contact Sandra Loughton, Facilitator, at [bookgirl8@hotmail.com](mailto:bookgirl8@hotmail.com). New members are always welcome to see what we're all about.

**Two opportunities for Centering Prayer:** This Zoom-based group will meet **Mondays at 12:30** for a simple format with 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](mailto:james@rhuc.org)) for Zoom links to both prayer times.

**From Ian Wilgus:** Hi everyone! For my preaching class this term at Emmanuel College, I have been asked to run a **Bible Study** on [Mark 9:2-9](#), the passage I will be preaching on February 14, 2021. We will read the passage together, so no preparation is needed on your part. I hope the discussions will be enriching for all of us. Your insights will be immensely valuable for me in my preparation.

Rev. James Ravenscroft will be co-facilitating the discussions with me. This session will be on **Thursday, Jan. 28th, 2021 from 7:00-8:30pm.**

Any questions? Contact me at [ianwilgus@rogers.com](mailto:ianwilgus@rogers.com)! I hope to see you there. Zoom

link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82206985789?pwd=TE9KbzZVQ0dQMjJPOTBDNXZkOWR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 822 0698 5789 Passcode: 993784

**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. Monday's discussion will be based on a TED talk by Celeste Headlee entitled "10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation". 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](mailto:dlbrown@yorku.ca).

## 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](mailto:james@rhuc.org). Email Deb at [office@rhuc.org](mailto:office@rhuc.org) or phone message at 905-884-1301 ext. 5.

**Anniversaries** are meant to be celebrated and RHUC had one to celebrate this year: **it was 65 years ago this month that Bill Lekx joined our choir!!!** In 1956, Bill had just arrived in Richmond Hill from Holland, living on Centre Street, just west of Yonge, and had a job at Redelmeier's dairy farm, on the north side of Major Mackenzie Drive, west of Bathurst. Bill has been our "token" farmer for many years. After attending the service at our church, the minister saw him walking on the street the coming week and knew he was the young man who had attended the service and had heard he had a great singing voice; the Town was small enough then that you'd notice someone new! Bill went to choir practice that week and was in the choir the next Sunday. Bill never left this position, giving his skill,

dedication, friendship and caring to the choir, and actually all work at RHUC. Congratulations Bill, you are one in a million and we are so privileged and grateful to have you as a member and friend. At 65 years, one often gets a gold watch and receives a pension, but alas not for volunteers in a church. And I count about fifteen Choir Directors Bill has worked with over the years, a feat in itself. An anniversary recognition was held during the service on January 17 with words and a prayer from James and a tribute from Barry, as printed below. The highlight was to hear a tape of Bill singing "There is a Balm in Gilead" with Bill's beautiful tenor voice, sung with such emotion and as an expression of his faith. If only the pandemic hadn't been raging and our worship service being held virtually, there would have been special guests and the Ministry of Cake. A year ago, I had thoughts of what we could do, but that was before Covid-19.

Donna Smith, organizer for this event, with all our love and appreciation to Bill and Stella Lekx

**Barry's Tribute to Bill Lekx - Sunday 17 January 2021:** When I was hired at RHUC 30 years ago, I clearly recall being told someone in the Choir worked in a dairy farm, in charge of my favourite breed of cattle: Jerseys! Given my love of cows, this was music to my ears, and added to the excitement of my new position. I enjoyed many delicious meals cooked by Stella, and their place felt like home to me! The more time I got to spend in the barn with Bill and the cows, the better! I would travel home in the evenings, smelling of manure, with pride, and always ended up with a subway car to myself!

Then, there's Bill the singer, who has faithfully sung in this Choir longer than I've been on this planet! Bill's 65 years of dedicated service to the Choir and to this Church is something one seldom sees in this lifetime. I've always known Bill to be early and never late, every Thursday and Sunday, always ready to help out.

I'm sure one could count on one hand the rare number of practices and Services Bill has missed in all these years. As many of you know, our Choir sings an eclectic variety of anthems, containing diverse languages, such as: Latin, Swahili, German, French, Italian and Gaelic! Bill's preferred language was English! However, his body language was bigger than the room itself!! ESPECIALLY when it came to Gaelic!! Typical of Bill, he never complained, but soldiered on with brave enthusiasm!

Bill's singing voice is a God-given gift, with an instinctive ability to touch the human soul.

When our Choir recorded it's first CD, Bill is featured singing the spiritual, "Balm in Gilead" ~ which Bill sings today! When I proudly distributed this CD to many prominent choral conductors, they all remarked on the depth of emotion and sincerity that Bill poured into this song.

Some of you may have been lucky enough to witness one of the Choir's "Flip Side" concerts, which featured Bill performing "STOP! In the Name of Love", by Diana Ross; equipped with a dress and a huge black fright wig - flailing his huge hands, thrust right out every time he sang "STOP!" This rare performance will be forever etched in the minds of many of us!

Not only is Bill a dedicated singer, but he also chose readers, put up hymns on the hymn board Sunday by Sunday, folded weekly bulletins, put on coffee in Centennial Hall, admitted choristers into rehearsal weekly, provided water for the Minister and myself, (joking it was actually vodka!). Bill has always been a dedicated RHUC visitor to those who most need visits, even travelling as far for this purpose on occasions to visit an incarcerated individual in Kingston. Bill's infectious warmth and positive spirit have touched many, and he is truly a living saint of the Church! Know Bill, that our love will always be with you and you will always remain in our hearts. ~ Barry ~

If you have additional stories about Bill that you would like to share with him and Stella, please send to James at [james@rhuc.org](mailto:james@rhuc.org) and we will get them to Bill.

**A message from our student minister:** Dear Friends, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. As most of you may already know, I am doing my ministry internship this year at RHUC. It is a great joy for me to work in my home church. I am grateful for the opportunities to serve as I have been served. This is my last semester of seminary study at Tyndale. Thank you all for the support and encouragement you have given me as I train for ministry. My goal during my internship is to learn about intercultural ministry and how to apply it in a congregational setting. It is challenging not to meet with people physically and not to learn in a "normal" situation, but I know I will learn a lot with all of you. I pray for wisdom and creativity. May I use the time of internship well in learning and in ministry with you. I welcome any suggestions and feedback you will give to help me improve and grow. *Julia Ye*

**Mission Action Plan Update:** We have continued over this past year to work with SHS Consulting to move forward with the work associated with seeking a re-development partner(s) for the Village Commons (former CD Building) as agreed at our last AGM.

Work this year has included completion of a property survey and environmental assessment - both of which are required as part of preparation for the development of a Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) that will be sent out to a targeted list of developers.

On December 4, 2020, SHS Consulting led an online Design Workshop with groups currently using RHUC facilities and others in the community that have expressed interest. This included a number of social services, environmental organizations and arts groups - including the Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts that sees our vision of a Centre for Community and the Arts as an important potential development in the village core.

The energy and level of interest at the session on December 4th illustrated how much demand there is for partnership in community space and how different groups can see themselves working in collaboration. Some organizations were unable to attend and follow up activities are planned to ensure their input is captured.

RHUC space needs will of course also be included in the overall summary that will be part of the REOI.

There will be a joint Mission Action Business Plan (MABP)/Board meeting on Feb. 10th with SHS Consulting to ensure everyone is up to speed re proposed next steps. An online meeting with interested members of the congregation to share more detailed information and proposed work plan for 2021 is planned for later in February - date to be confirmed.

## lifting our spirits

As we once again endure another period of lockdown, we will once again have a section of "RHUC Reflections" focused on keeping everyone's spirits up. 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](mailto:office@rhuc.org).

**WHAT IF IT'S JUST NATURE?** By Julie Sheldon  
 What if it's just Nature – Taking back control,  
 questioning the actions of every living soul.  
 What if it's just Nature – asking us to stop  
 to think about our planet and treasure what we've got.  
 What if it's just Nature – slowing us right down.  
 Time to look around us and see what can be found.  
 What if it's just Nature – asking us to think  
 what is it that we really need? Love, health and food and drink.  
 What if it's just Nature – giving us the time  
 to be more understanding, generous, and kind.  
 What if it's just Nature – asking us to care,  
 to think about each other and sometimes just be there.  
 What if it's just Nature – sending us this pain.  
 Time to re-evaluate before we're all insane.  
 What if it's just Nature – setting us a test  
 to try to save our planet.  
 Let's do our very best!

## outreach

**Out of the Cold:** Join the RHUC Team for a virtual walk on **Saturday February 20<sup>th</sup>** for the Out-of-the-Cold's annual fundraiser. We will need a team name to register so send your suggestion to Donna Smith, [donnasmith44@rogers.com](mailto:donnasmith44@rogers.com). Hopefully this event will help connect us when we can't gather at our church but also support this very worthy cause.

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.