

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Worship

Sun., January 29th – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

10:30 a.m. Service: This week we are pleased to welcome El-Farouk Khaki as our guest speaker. El-Farouk is a Canadian refugee and immigration lawyer, and human rights activist on issues including gender equality, sexual orientation, and progressive Islam. El-Farouk was born in Tanzania, which his family fled in 1971 escaping political persecution. His parents arrived in Canada in 1974 and settled in Vancouver where Khaki grew up. He earned a law degree from the University of British Columbia before moving to Ottawa in 1988 and has lived and worked in Toronto since 1989. He worked as a political staffer at Queen's Park until 1993 when he left to establish his legal practice. Khaki is a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada and has been in private practice since 1993.

Khaki founded *Salaam* in 1991, a support group for gay Muslims. In 2003, he helped organized the first female-led, mixed-gender Muslim congregational prayers in Canada for the Salaam/Al-Fateha International Conference, and in 2005, organized the first such prayers anywhere to be held in a mosque.

Khaki was the 2009 parade grand marshal for Toronto's Pride Parade. In 2016, Khaki was named by The Advocate magazine to a list of "21 LGBT Muslims Who Are Changing the World."

Khaki founded Salaam, the first gay Muslim group in Canada and second in the world, in 1993, and organized the Salaam/Al-Fateha International Conference in 2003. He co-founded and served as Secretary General of the Muslim Canadian Congress; in August 2006 until the group split. Khaki and other members including much of the leadership of the MCC created a new organization, the Canadian Muslim Union (CMU). He also founded, with academic Laury Silvers, and his partner Troy Jackson the El-Tawhid Juma Circle. ETJC is a gender-equal, LGBTQ affirming space for Friday prayers.

The cover of the September 2016 issue of *The United Church Observer* magazine featured a photo of El-Farouk and his partner, Troy Jackson, as co-founders of Unity Mosque in Toronto. Their work was the topic of the lead article.

El-Farouk - welcome to RHUC!

Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

Sunday, February 5th

12:00 p.m. Healing service

Sunday, February 12th – Guest drummer Larry Graves

Sunday, February 19th – Baptism

Sunday, February 26th – Scouting Sunday

12:00 p.m. Annual Congregational Meeting

Minister's Message

I'd like to go back a bit to last week and pause on the Prayer of Approach. This prayer is sometimes called an Opening Prayer or a Collect. The purpose of the prayer is to orient our minds and hearts to what we are about as we worship. We are "approaching" to one we call God. We are opening ourselves to the gift of the Spirit, to Holy Love. Sometimes this prayer will include an element of confession, an acknowledgement that we do not always live as we ought. There is a thematic quality to the prayer, often referring to the elements from the readings that will be focused on during the service, or referring to aspects of the church season. The term Collect is sometimes used because the prayer is intended to "collect" each of our individual prayers as we enter the time of worship. The prayer traditionally uses an address to God and acknowledges aspects of who God is. However, the prayer can also be less theistic, acknowledging who we are as we come to worship and then name the larger mystery of which we are a part. In both forms of prayer, we nevertheless make "may we..." statements as we acknowledge a need for our hearts to be transformed if we are to be a part of a transformed world.

Looking ahead: This coming Sunday our readings will be Matthew 5:1-12 and a poetic quote from Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, an Islamic scholar and Sufi mystic from 13th century Persia. Our preacher is Imam El-Farouk Kakhi, co-founder of Masjid el-Tawhid - Toronto, a gender-equal and queer-affirming mosque which upholds the full equality of all people. Next week our readings will be Matthew 5:13-20 and 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

Upcoming Baptism Celebration

Is there a new (or not so new) little person in your family? Were you considering the possibility of baptism? We have a celebration coming up on **February 19, 2017**. Contact James (james@rhuc.org) to find out more, including details about preparation sessions leading up to the celebration.

ENGAGING, CHALLENGING & GROWING OUR FAITH

H.A.I.R.

HAIR, the Monday evening study group, will be beginning a GREAT new book on **January 30th**. We will read and discuss the book **Faith versus Fact** by Jerry A. Coyne. The author argues that science and religion are incompatible. Come join the discussion at **7:00 p.m. in the chapel**. Copies are available from Deb in the church office for \$20.00, or pay what you can. It is an easy read and written for the layperson.

January 30 - Preface: The Genesis of This Book and Chapter 1: The Problem. (37 pp.)
February 6 - Chapter 2a: What's Incompatible? (38 pp.)
February 13 - Chapter 2b: What's Incompatible? (31 pp.)
February 20 - Family Day (no session)
February 27 - Chapter 3a: Why Accommodationism Fails? (26 pp.)
March 6 - Chapter 3b: Why Accommodationism Fails? (26 pp.)
March 13 - March Break (no session)
March 20 - Chapter 4a: Faith Strikes Back (33 pp.)
March 27 - Chapter 4b: Faith Strikes Back (39 pp.)
April 3 - Chapter 5: Why Does It Matter? (39 pp.)

Youth Group Outing!

Calling all youth and their friends too!! This **Friday, January 27th**, we will be meeting at **Laser Quest Richmond Hill** and doing one of their escape rooms. Our adventure will be booked on Monday January 23rd and we will need firm numbers beforehand. The Key Quest hours are from 8-11pm but they may open at another time for a group of 6 or more. The cost is \$15/person and we'll have some snacks and social time afterwards. Once the booking is made an email will be sent to those who have RSVP'd with exact details of the time and which room we will be solving. It's going to be a lot of fun!! Please RSVP to Paula Windsor at 647-237-5037, or gelpwind@sympatico.ca by 9pm Sunday January 22nd. You can also speak to her at church Sunday morning.

United Church Women (UCW)

The UCW will hold their meeting on **February 1st, 2017 at 9:30 am in the Parlour**. Craig and Mary Lee will entertain us as we celebrate Viola Butler's 101st Birthday, as well as Canada's 150th and UCW 55th Anniversary. All ladies are welcome. For more information call June Blanchette 905-780-0048.

Bible Study

Thursday Bible Study: Beginning **Thursday, January, 19th**, James will be facilitating a Thursday evening bible study sessions from **6:30 – 7:30 PM**. We will meet in "**The Meeting Room**" (not sure what else to call Linda's office). We will begin by looking at the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday, looking at their historical and cultural contexts and the wisdom they can offer us.

Shalom Seekers

Please join us in the **Chapel on Monday, January 30 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.** We will be viewing the last segment of our DVD - Violence Divine: Overcoming the Bible's Betrayal of Its Non-Violent God featuring theologian and scholar John Dominic Crossan. This session will tie up the entire series and challenge us to think of ways that we can move forward in our own church.

The books for our next study have arrived! You may pick up your copy on Monday and the cost per book is \$18.50. (**Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith** by Diana Butler Bass)

For more information about the group, please speak to one of the facilitators: Dawn Moon, Peg Hiscoke, or Sandra Loughton or just show up any Monday morning! New members are always welcome to try us out.

RHUC Book Club

Please join us on **Wednesday, February 22 at 7 p.m.** to discuss Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. This work of non-fiction was a 2015 selection for CBC's Canada Reads competition. "Every Canadian should read Thomas King's new book. . . It's funny, it's readable, and it makes you think. If you have any kind of a social conscience, The Inconvenient Indian will also make you angry." ~ Toronto Star

We have obtained a book club set of ten books from the Aurora Library and those have been distributed to book club members already. Both the Richmond Hill and Aurora libraries have copies of this book, or you could check with someone in the group and borrow a book set copy.

Members of the congregation are more than welcome to join us for this meeting. For more information, please speak to Sandra Loughton or Lyn May.

Special Occasions

Writing to the church in Rome, the apostle Paul urged them: "rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep". While we include in our prayers, the names of people who are ill or mourning, we are not always aware of the special occasions which give rise to rejoicing. This column is an effort to rectify that situation. Don't hesitate to add any special occasions you know about.

Nurturing our Spirituality

On the first Tuesday of the month, **Joanne Scofield** will be offering **Yoga and Meditation** - a yoga practice that will use postures and breathing to bring the body and mind to a place of relaxation and stillness for meditation. The next Yoga and Meditation will be on **February 7 from 7:00 – 8:00 in the Chapel**.

HOSPITALITY & WORKING FOR JUSTICE

Out of the Cold 2017 – help needed!

Out of the Cold starts at the end of January on Monday nights at St. Mary's Anglican church. Our church is providing 4 dinners - Feb 6 and 13, and March 6 and 27th. I will be looking for dessert contributions - Feb 6 fruit crisps, Feb 13 carrot cake, March 6 gingerbread and applesauce and March 27 TBA. Of course, homemade cookies and squares are always welcome, any time for snacks and bag lunches. It's easiest if you bring things in disposable containers, and leave them in the big glass frig at church. I check regularly and freeze whatever needs to be kept. I will be available after church for sign up or you can let me know via email or phone. If you are interested in volunteering in other ways, just let me know and I'll find a spot for you! Thanks for your help in the past, and anything you can do this year. Lyn May, Outreach Chair

Sock Hop!



Hands and Hearts for Africa invites you to join us at our **2017 Sock Hop on Saturday Feb 25th. From 5:30-9:30pm**, the lower gym will be 'hopping' with our annual music, pasta and auction extravaganza. Why not beat the winter blahs and make a difference for African AIDS families? Who can resist a delicious pasta dinner followed by the 50s-60s music of a live band and an amazing array of silent auction items? Tickets are \$25 each or \$45 per family for a wonderful evening that would be perfect as a birthday or Valentine's gift. We have some interesting auction items already including lunch with the mayor, a Mastermind gift basket and entry for two to our RHUC golf tournament. Please join the fun and help support the crucial work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Tickets are on sale today and through February at our ticket table after the service or at the church office. Let's go to THE HOP!

Minute for Mission *Called to be the Church*

Our gifts for Mission & Service support the Deaf community in the Quinte region. The Quinte Deaf Fellowship is an outreach ministry that provides essential spiritual services to the Deaf community of the Quinte region of Ontario, which has one of the highest per capita populations of Deaf people in Canada. The 20 or so members meet weekly in the chapel space at Bridge Street United Church in Belleville. Helen Bickle, a designated lay minister, offers leadership to the group. They dream of one day having their own space for Bible study, support groups, social events, and prayer meetings. Many who attend the Fellowship are on social assistance and therefore do not have a lot of disposable income to help the church with its dream. We are thankful that through support from Mission & Service the Fellowship is able to continue its important ministry. Most of the grant the Fellowship receives supports Helen, whose leadership is vitally important as the Fellowship expands its vision and outreach. Members continue to reach out to the community, the city of Belleville, the province of Ontario, and national ministries with the Deaf to form partnerships. This ensures the continuation of this vital ministry that offers so many people a place of welcome.

Net Zero

The Net Zero Committee would like to wish you a Happy New Year and to remind you to stay the course on acting for the environment. The issues facing our planet have moved past 'serious' into 'dire'. Rather than being extremist, this is actually probably understating the situation, which has reached this stage because we are often too uncomfortable to speak about the reality. While the science is alarming, there are also many rational answers available and exciting solutions to our global issues - if we will pay attention.

The Net Zero Committee is asking you to resolve to start the conversation with your family and at work, regularly, throughout the coming year. We offer the following resources to help you find quick information to support your conversations:

The David Suzuki Foundation: <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/blogs/science-matters/2017/01/its-time-to-heed-warnings-about-humanitys-collision-course/>

Ecos Environmental Health: <https://www.facebook.com/EcosEnvironmentalHealth>

Keep sharing your eco actions with each other as well - let's challenge ourselves to do what we can to make a difference.

CREATING AND NURTURING COMMUNITY

Volunteer Opportunity @ RHUC

- Are you interested in communication?
- Do you have knowledge about marketing, design, website and social media?
- Do you want to see us improve how we share our message both within our congregation and to the broader community?

Then we have a great opportunity for you! We are putting together a **Communication and Promotion Team** for RHUC. Let James know if you are interested.

Quilting group

The **RHUC Quilters** met on Saturday January 21st and made significant headway on our first donation quilt for 2017. Our next sew day will be **Saturday February 18th from 12:30 to 3:00** in the Centennial Hall. Sewers and non-sewers alike are welcome. There is always a job for everyone. Feel free to bring along your lunch and tea will be available.

Blog post

Soc Hop - Saturday, February 25, 2017 <https://rhucblog.wordpress.com/2017/01/05/soc-hop-saturday-february-25-2017/>

Counselling available

Joanne Scofield is currently doing a Counselling Internship at RHUC. This is in conjunction with a course she is taking at the Toronto Centre for Pastoral Care Education. The counselling is confidential and free of charge. If you are interested in counselling, please contact Joanne directly at 416-618-5597.

Treasures – donations needed

Treasures Charity Thrift Shop is in need of donations: 12 Levendale Road, Richmond Hill, 905 883 5122:

- Clothing
- Books
- Household items

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