



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 looked over our Fourth Intention as a faith community, that is to "Develop Intentional Opportunities for People to Gather to Build Relationships, Nourish Spiritual Wellness and Engage in Justice" my heart sank. After all, the plan was rooted in two main ideas: encouraging small group ministries and developing an intergenerational justice project which included participation from the wider community, and we had not gotten very far with those two concepts before the pandemic let alone during. Plus, our hoped-for series of games nights had to be skuttled because of the lockdown, along with annual gatherings like the UCW Tea and the Advent Craft Dinner. Unlike the intentions we have considered so far, Intention Four needs for us to be together in-person, doesn't it?

But then I did a review of the past year. I thought about the virtual coffee meetings that we've been holding since the pandemic began and the bible study held via Zoom during the fall. I thought about all of the various study and spirituality groups of the church - Shalom Seekers, HAIR, Women's Spirituality, Men's Breakfast, the UCW, Book Club, Faith Exploration, Pub Theology - that found ways to meet be it organizing a garden gathering (with masks and social distancing) or learning how to conduct a group using Zoom. I thought about Anne and Ian hosting a virtual check in each week with youth and the virtual youth group events that we have had. I thought about the Anti-Racism Awareness Group Julia has been facilitating and the Lenten Book Study exploring *The Skin We're In* and *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act* that Sandra and I are co-hosting. I thought about the centering prayer groups that meet online and how we decided to use Breakout Rooms at the end of worship in order to give people a chance to chat with people they may not know and engage more deeply with those they do.

As I thought about all of these activities, I wondered why my heart sank at first. Once the pandemic is over, we will turn our attention to the specific projects that we named. But in the meantime, we can be proud of the fact that we have found ways to keep nurturing our sense of community, to support one another as we learn together, to deeply consider the call to justice and respond with action, to keep being us in the midst of a trying time. If this isn't living into the spirit of Intention Four, I don't know what is.

worship and music

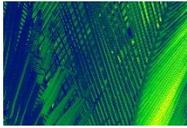
[Order of service](#) [Hymns](#) [Discovery Time at home](#)

James' video to

children: <https://1drv.ms/v/s!A1BjmozEVDROgaVhiYKfyj8z-giVfw>

Sunday, March 21: On this last Sunday before Holy Week, we conclude our reflections on the cross, pondering the paradox of how death can lead to life. We look at John 12:20-33 in which Jesus speaks of the need for the seed to let go of itself in order to produce fruit, and Hebrews 5:5-10 in which the author reflects on how Jesus let go of his life for others. We also reflect on a quote from 12th century monk Aelred of Rievaulx in which the cross is understood as a source of not just death but of life.

Sunday March 28: We begin Holy Week as we pause to remember how crowds welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem and begin to tell the story of Jesus' last days in preparation for marking Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.



Virtual Palm Parade: A reminder that we will celebrate a picture-based palm parade. Please send James a picture of yourself holding a branch from our local area. You may want to go outside and cut a small spruce or cedar bough or perhaps some pussy willow branches. If you prefer, stay indoors and take a photo with a houseplant. Alternatively, think of items that express a celebratory welcome like streamers. Please send to james@rhuc.org by March 25.

Holy Week Services: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday services will all be held via Zoom. To mark these holiest of days in a way that is meaningful and full, we will use rich visuals throughout the services.

1. Maundy Thursday at 7:00 pm. We will take time to share the "maundatum" within our homes, family members taking time to wash one another's feet or to wash one's own hands. We will also eat together akin to what people have done for their own family gatherings for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

2. Good Friday at 10:30 am. RHUC youth are helping to put together a video to help us see the connection between Jesus' arrest, trial and death, and what is happening in our local and global community.

3. For Easter Sunday, we will gather twice via Zoom:

- **Sunrise Service, 6:45 am.** Log in from an east facing window so we can see the sun rise together. If not, take a picture of the sunrise on an earlier day and share with the group. Like for Maundy Thursday we'll eat "together".
- **Communion Service, 10:30 am.** We want to make the connection between Easter and our lives. Take time between now and March 25 to prayerfully walk your neighbourhood or other favourite spot and take a picture of something that speaks to your heart of new life, resurrection, renewal in the face of death. Send to james@rhuc.org so they can be placed into a video for the service.

Celebrating the Spring Equinox: Come celebrate Spring with *Three Rivers Forest Church* this **Sunday, March 21 at 3 pm.** Celebrate the Equinox and ponder the gift of balance on what should be a beautiful day. We will gather at Mill Pond Park, starting at the gazebo for a time of shared prayer and reflection before heading off for our own personal meditation walks. Given the weather forecast there will likely be more than a few other people out and about, but we will maintain safe distancing throughout our time together and people are free to walk in the neighbourhood rather than the park if they feel safer that way. Dress warmly and be sure to wear a mask. All are welcome.



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.

Have you considered being a reader during worship? If so, then read on. Harry Ramsaran, the Chair of the Worship Committee, also coordinates the roster of readers and he is looking for new people to add to his list. Simply email Harry at harrypersad.ramsaran@gmail.com and let him know. He will be in touch when an opportunity to read is coming up. James or Deb will send you the readings by the Wednesday of the week before your scheduled Sunday, and depending on the situation with the pandemic, Brandon or Caroline will contact you to explain how you will read from home via Zoom. It is that simple.

programs for all

Shalom Seekers: On **Monday March 22** at 10 am we will meet on Zoom to continue our Lenten study "Lifting up Scripture through Art." We will be considering a variety of art forms including the unusual, paired with 3 Lectionary readings. For more information, please 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 **Wednesdays 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. Yarn, needles and hooks are available. Phone Donna Smith, 905-884-6307 for information, and to get the Zoom link.

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, racism, social justice, ethics, science, 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.

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

Lenten Book Study: 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*

Pub Theology: Friday, March 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.



RHUC Book Club: Please join us on Wednesday, **March 31st at 4 p.m.** on Zoom (by video or telephone) to discuss the novel *Recipe for a Perfect Wife* by Oakville resident, Karma Brown. The link for the meeting will be sent out

by e-mail the day before the meeting.

On **April 28th at 4 p.m.** we'll be gathering once again on Zoom to discuss *CHASING PAINTED HORSES*, a novel by Drew Hayden Taylor, an Ojibway from the Curve Lake First Nations in Ontario. This book is the 2021 selection for the One Book/One Aurora Program put on by the Aurora Public Library. I will be getting in touch with everyone to see about picking up their copy of the book. The Aurora Library is kindly lending us a set of 20 books for the month of April. The Zoom invitation will be sent out the day before the meeting. New members are always welcome. Please speak to me, Sandra Loughton, for more details about the book club.

church news

SAVE THE DATES

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.

Nominations Committee: The Nominations Committee is looking to fill the following roles:

1. **Vice-Chair of the Church Board**
2. **Members of the Finance Committee**

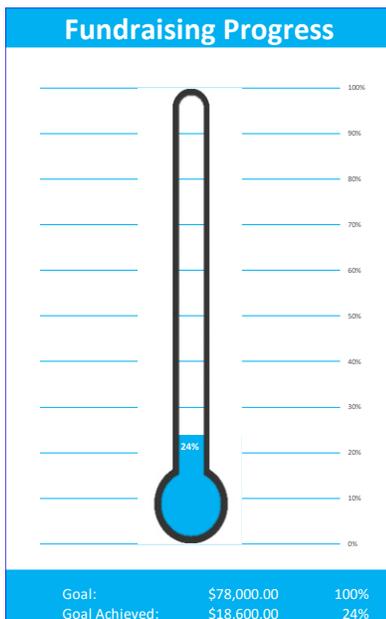
If you have questions about the above positions simply contact one of the following committee members: Kathleen Crosbie (klkcrosbie 'at' gmail.com); Donna Harrison (donna115 'at' sympatico.ca) Donna Smith (donnasmith44 'at' rogers.com); and Doug Loweth (loweth 'at' sympatico.ca)

community news

CAYR: *Boys & Books* is a new book discussion group for cis and trans guys into guys starting on April 13th and are hoping to create a space for guys to re-connect with the community after a tough year of feeling isolated. This is partnered with the Aurora Public Library who have a few copies of each book that folks can borrow for free if they would like - registration link is: <https://forms.gle/o1Lm9mncrH23F8RC8>

HIV Self Testing Kits will soon be available for folks to test themselves for HIV in their own space. This is a video of how the tests work if interested: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1G1ia1S7uZo>

To Infinity and Beyond is a workshop running to celebrate Trans Day of Visibility on March 31st, CAYR Community Connections brings you this workshop focused on exploring the galaxies within you. Join us for a relaxed and interactive workshop filled with fun activities exploring the different kinds of transgender identities that exist! This workshop is presented by CAYR Community Connections and hosted by City of Markham Aaniin Community Hub. Registration is open at <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/to-infinity-and-beyond-exploring-transgender-identities-tickets-118056156141>



Boosting Our Signal Campaign: RHUC has embarked on a project to upgrade our AV capabilities. This project, to be implemented in Phases, not only improves the livestream services, but helps us to achieve some of our long-term ministry goals. You can donate via etransfer to office@rhuc.org, cheque or



We are now at **24%** of our goal!! Thank you!

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.

'Clay is molded into vessels, and because of the space where there is nothing, you can carry water. Space is carved out from a wall, and because of the place where there is nothing, you can receive light. Be empty, and you will remain full...' - Lao-Tsu

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Outreach

Save The Date: Learn more and register at www.cdngrandmothers.com **VIRTUAL CONCERT FUNDRAISER THURSDAY, APRIL 15 'TOGETHER IN CONCERT': IN SOLIDARITY WITH AFRICAN GRANDMOTHERS.** A Tapestry of Canadian Talent on April 15, 2021 ~ 7:30 pm EDT. Join us online for a 90-minute concert of music, dance, storytelling and drumming with host Jackie Richardson, an award-winning performer for her theatre and music achievements and featuring Steven Page, National Ballet of Canada, David Myles, Stratford Festival and Sheree Fitch. Hosted by Canadian Grandmothers. A FREE concert and donations are appreciated ~ all proceeds are raised for the Grandmothers-to-Grandmothers Campaign of the Stephen Lewis Foundation