



**Please be advised that the church building is closed until further notice. As a loving and compassionate community, it is imperative that we keep everyone safe, especially the most vulnerable. As a consequence, this means that all communal gatherings in the building are suspended, including gatherings and meetings hosted by community groups. We will attempt to shift as many church meetings and other gatherings online, including worship.**

Because worship is such an important way by which we come together in community, we are offering a couple of options for people to gather remotely. On the "Worship Services and Opportunities for Reflection" page (accessible through the "spirituality" tab on the homepage) you will find three links, one for the livestreamed worship service that will be hosted through RHUC's Facebook page, [Online Services: facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/](https://www.facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/) another for a home based worship resource you can use to follow along or to take time for personal reflection, and one for an at home "Discovery Time" with children. Following the online service, a recording of the message will be posted through the blog.

This is a stressful time for everyone. As we practice "self isolation" and "social distancing", we still need to be a supportive presence to one another. To this end, we will keep in touch through telephone and email. We have vulnerable people in our congregation and wider community. To this end, we are asking for help. If you are able to pick up groceries and other supplies for those who are homebound, please contact the church. Equally, if you are in need of this kind of support, also contact the church. Please email [office@rhuc.org](mailto:office@rhuc.org).

In the meantime, may we continue to keep each other and our world in prayer, especially those who are most vulnerable, those who are grieving, those who are struggling in any way. May we continue to show love and compassion, even from a distance. Be well as we continue to keep one another safe.

**Minister's Message:** As I shared in my message on Sunday, boy does a few days make a difference. The situation in the world has shifted so quickly. Not that long ago, we were going about our day to day routines, albeit washing our hands a lot more and being way more conscious of how often we subconsciously touch our faces (it's a lot). We were implementing protocols we learned during the SARS outbreak but then it all changed and now we're "sheltering in place". We are so used to connecting with others as an act of loving kindness. Now staying away from each other is how we are to be loving and kind. As we head into the coming weeks, we all need to guard against social distancing turning into emotional distancing and self-isolation becoming social isolation. We risk that becoming the case if we don't put some new habits into practice. Here are a few that I have gleaned by watching the news, reading articles and talking to my brother-in-law who has worked from home for a very long time.

1. Don't stay in your pyjamas. Have a shower, groom yourself and put on proper clothes. After all you're still going to work, just at home.
2. Remember to take breaks. Get up, stretch, walk around the room, take a breather from the computer screen. And when your work day is done, walk away from work. You don't have the commute buffer so find a way to let go of work mode and shift into family mode.
3. Be patient with yourself. This is all very new. It is okay to feel overwhelmed. When you do, find ways to rest your mind. Do something mindless. Watch a cartoon. Sing with a karaoke machine. Take some time to laugh. Laughter boosts the immune system.
4. Take a nature break. A literal break in nature. We all need to take a bit of time outside, away from people, but still outside. Breathe in the air. Feel the wind on your face. Watch for the coming spring all around us.
5. Ration your news intake. It is really easy to get overwhelmed by all of the information. Watch a bit but then switch to something else.
6. Take the extra time you have to do something you have always wanted to do. Read War and Peace. Learn how to play the guitar. Take an online course.
7. Remember to connect with others. Be like the Italians and open your window and sing to your neighbours. Phone them to see they are okay. Help those who are vulnerable, albeit maintaining social distance protocols.

And remember that we will get through this. As long as we take it one day at a time, being sure to change out of our pyjamas.

## worship and music

**Sunday, March 22:** We may be dispersed but we still come together to worship via Facebook Live. We reflect together on the story of Jesus healing the man who was blind from birth. John 9:1-41 is the whole story. We will read selected verses. In this story Jesus repeats the claim from the previous statement, saying to his followers that he is the "Light of the world". We also reflect on an excerpt from Og Mandino's *The Greatest Salesman of the World*. They are both an invitation to see the world with new eyes.

Online Services:

[facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/](https://www.facebook.com/RichmondHillUnitedChurch/)

**Sunday, March 29:** We continue to hear selections from John's gospel. In John 11:1-45. In this story of Lazarus being raised from the dead, we also hear Jesus offer another "I am" statement, saying "I am the resurrection and the life."

**Worship Notes:** We are in unique times. Closing down the church leaves many of us feeling disconnected. It is important that we find ways to continue being together as a community and worship is a prime way of doing this. There are a few different platforms for online worship. We have opted to use Facebook Live. This is an easy to use platform and does not require a "meeting id" for people to watch the worship service in real time. We pride ourselves at RHUC on being a community where everyone is welcome. We want to ensure that the wider community can participate in our online worship option. It does mean a slightly more static service than what is possible on other platforms but we will keep it as engaging as we can. We may be dispersed but we are still worshipping together.

**Sunday offering and Lenten Givings** (Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold) Please give online through CanadaHelps, <http://www.rhuc.org/donate.html> etransfer to office@rhuc or mail a cheque to the church office. 10201 Yonge St., RH L4C 3B2

**Upcoming Transfer of Membership:** According to the polity of The United Church of Canada, while we are all part of the Church by reason of our baptism, we live that out in a local congregation. We become members of a congregation either through the Reaffirmation of our Faith and the Laying on of Hands (also known as confirmation) or by transferring our membership from one congregation to another. The United Church recognizes confirmation celebrated in other denominations. During the upcoming Easter season, a Sunday is being set aside to recognize people who would like to be members of RHUC. Please let James or Deb know if you would either like to transfer your membership or to be received into membership by reaffirmation.

## programs for all

**Lenten Bible Study:** Beginning on Thursday March 19 at 7:00PM, Bible Study moves online.

**H.A.I.R.:** Due to the closure of the church, H.A.I.R. is cancelled for the time being. Should the closure be prolonged, we will look at ways to meet online.

**Shalom Seekers:** Shalom Seekers has suspended all meetings until the COVID-19 crisis has abated. Added to that, the church is basically closed down now. Let's hope that it isn't too long before we can gather again on Monday mornings. When it is safe to resume, we will continue with session three of the DVD study called ProFuture Faith with eco-theologian Reverend Michael Dowd. Please check in Reflections or your e-mails to see updates and notices about starting to meet again. We will give you lots of notice. When we last gathered and sung our closing song, did we know how poignant the words would become?

"Shalom my friends, Shalom my friends, Shalom, Shalom. 'Til we meet again, 'til we meet again, Shalom, Shalom."  
Stay well everyone. Sandra Loughton & Peg Hiscoke, Co-facilitators

**RHUC Book Club:** As you know, our March meeting that was scheduled for the 25th has been postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines. For March we are reading *THE DIFFERENCE* by Canadian author Marina Endicott. If we are able to meet in April (either on the 22nd or the 29th) we will discuss The Difference that evening at 7 p.m. in the Chapel. If we can't meet in April, we'll move the discussion to May. As we are all painfully aware, it's a wait and see scenario right now.

If you are able to share your library copies of this book, you could arrange to drop them off or pick them up from a friend by leaving them on the doorstep or in the mailbox on the front porch. (No face-to-face contact necessary.) I would recommend using hand sanitizer or wipes to clean the covers before starting to read. My sister is a nurse, and she always does that with any library book as a matter of course long before COVID-19. I think people have been asked to keep library books at home for now until the libraries re-open so I'm sure that late fees won't be an issue.

Please be assured that I will keep you updated as the weeks go by and give you lots of notice when we're able to meet again at the church. Check here in REFLECTIONS and/or through your e-mails. In the meantime, KEEP CALM & READ ON. Stay well.

Sandra Loughton, Facilitator

**Prayers Shawls:** Finished knitted/crocheted shawls are given to people who are unwell, grieving, moving away and also to celebrate a birth, joining our church or other special occasion as a way to show the church cares with a hope that the warmth of the shawl will bring comfort and joy. **Even though the church building is closed, please continue to make the shawls at home.** Donna Smith, Coordinator, 905-884-6306

**Youth Confirmation:** Are you in Grades 7 to 12? Do you want to deepen your understanding of the United Church and your Christian faith? Do you want to become a full member of RHUC and so be able to participate in all aspects of decision-making and leadership in the congregation? If any of this sparks your interest (or as a parent you think it might spark your teen's interest), James is planning to lead Confirmation classes over the Easter season (April 12 to May 24). Contact him ([james@rhuc.org](mailto:james@rhuc.org)) for more information or to register.

**Pub Theology is moving online:** next week's Pub Theology, Friday, March 27, has a new home – online through Zoom. Those who would like to participate, please email James ([james@rhuc.org](mailto:james@rhuc.org)) to receive the meeting code.

## church news

**Broadview subscription:** if you would like to renew your subscription or start a subscription, please give your payment of \$25 (cheque to RHUC, cash or etransfer to [office@rhuc.org](mailto:office@rhuc.org)) to Deb in the office by March 23, 2020. Thank you.

Happy 97<sup>th</sup> birthday to **Oda Barlow** on March 27<sup>th</sup>!

**Cancelled:** The **UCW** has decided not to hold their Annual Spring Lunch. As everyone enjoyed the quiches, as a fundraiser, we will be making them in time for Easter. Details to follow.

Hold the date of **Wednesday, June 3** for UCW's bus trip to Thornbury!

## keeping up our spirits

**As we look to the coming days and weeks of "sheltering in place" it is important we keep our spirits up. Each week RHUC Reflections will include some ideas, reflective words, poems, recipes (send to Deb at [office@rhuc.org](mailto:office@rhuc.org)), etc. to help in this challenging time.**

A member of the congregation recently wrote to me saying we need to "maintain Social Connectedness while we practice Social Distancing". I couldn't agree more. I read an article recently about putting just that into practice with one's neighbours. An enterprising person didn't know her neighbours very well but wanted to let them know that she could help get supplies, or just be a friendly voice on the other end of a phone. So she distributed a note to place on each door, sharing her contact information, while maintaining a safe, social distance. The template for this doorknob note is online.

Consider this reflection from Richard Rohr, ofm. His words offer us food for thought in this difficult time.

"It is shocking to think how much the world has changed in such a brief time. Each of us has had our lives and communities disrupted. Of course, I am here in this with you. I feel that I'm in no position to tell you how to feel or how to think, but there are a few things that come to mind I will share....

Right now I'm trying to take in psychologically, spiritually, and personally, what is God trying to say? When I use that phrase, I'm not saying that God causes suffering to teach us good things. But God does use everything, and if God wanted us to experience global solidarity, I can't think of a better way. We all have access to this suffering, and it bypasses race, gender, religion, and nation. We are in the midst of a highly teachable moment. There's no doubt that this period will be referred to for the rest of our lifetimes. We have a chance to go deep, and to go broad. Globally, we're in this together. Depth is being forced on us by great suffering, which as I like to say, always leads to great love. But for God to reach us, we have to allow suffering to wound us. Now is no time for an academic solidarity with the world. Real solidarity needs to be felt and suffered. That's the real meaning of the word "suffer" – to allow someone else's pain to influence us in a real way. We need to move beyond our own personal feelings and take in the whole. This, I must say, is one of the gifts of television: we can turn it on and see how people in countries other than our own are hurting. What is going to happen to those living in isolated places or for those who don't have health care? Imagine the fragility of the most marginalized, of people in prisons, the homeless, or even the people performing necessary services, such as ambulance drivers, nurses, and doctors, risking their lives to keep society together? Our feelings of urgency and devastation are not exaggeration: they are responding to the real human situation.... We need to allow these feelings, and invite God's presence to hold and sustain us in a time of collective prayer and lament.

I hope this experience will force our attention outwards to the suffering of the most vulnerable. Love always means going beyond yourself to otherness. It takes two. There has to be the lover and the beloved. We must be stretched to an encounter with otherness, and only then do we know it's love... Love alone overcomes fear and is the true foundation that lasts (1 Corinthians 13:13).

To put a smile on your face:

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10157065699026497&id=280550026496&sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=e](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10157065699026497&id=280550026496&sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=e)

### Poem: "Socks" by Samantha Reynolds ([www.bentily.com](http://www.bentily.com))

You are holding as many of your socks as you can carry  
their little limp skins piled and draped over you

I put the laundry away a few hours ago  
so I am instantly irritated  
as you drop them at my feet

but something on your face looks different  
a wobbly mix of resolve and concern  
so I ask you as calmly as I can  
why you have excavated your sock drawer

*you said everyone's socks had crashed  
so they can have mine*

I think back later  
and wonder if you will remember the explanation  
or just how I slid my hands  
inside two of the most colourful socks  
and let them do the talking.

## outreach activities

**Minute for Mission:** Emmanuel Dennis Ngongo was 13 years old when he came across the Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children's Rights (KAACR) through his school's Child's Rights Club. KAACR is a long-standing Mission & Service global partner. When his parents were transferred to another district and he had to change schools, Emmanuel wrote to KAACR to get help in launching a new club. Kenya has dire statistics on violence against children. For many young people, the situation is made worse by their inability to speak out at school or within their communities. Emmanuel was so inspired by his experiences with KAACR that he launched the Child's Rights Defenders Movement with other peers in 1999, which was hosted by KAACR. He later worked for KAACR as an advocate protecting girls from female genital mutilation and early marriage, and in general youth development work, where he coordinated Youth Employment Summit sessions in Kenya and throughout Africa.

### Climate Action Planning Instigated at the Church



**Climate Change Information Fair**  
Learn Practical Actions You Can Take Right Now

The #1 threat to Canada's economy

**Free Event**  
Sat. April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
St. Matthew's United Church:  
333 Crosby Ave,  
Richmond Hill

**Event will include:**

- Experts in the science and economics of the climate crisis
- Experts in home renovation and renewable energy use
- Reps from groups advocating for climate action
- Extensive educational and networking opportunities
- Refreshments

Join us on Facebook: [TargetingClimateChangeRH](https://www.facebook.com/TargetingClimateChangeRH)  
Richmond Hill

Inform others with #TargetingClimateChangeRH, @TargetClimate, @ON\_EcoSchools

For more info, please contact us at: [targetclimatechange@gmail.com](mailto:targetclimatechange@gmail.com)

SPAWDOWN Toronto 350.org

The RHUC community was asked to participate in climate action planning by creating or joining a small Climate Action Group (three people or family groups recommended). Have you joined one?

Groups will participate in these tasks:

1. **Meet virtually or physically once every three months (send a quick email to Esther Collier at [targetclimatechange@gmail.com](mailto:targetclimatechange@gmail.com) when you have met, including your group name in the subject line).**

**Meeting has been cancelled on** April 4, 1-3 pm, at St. Matthew's United Church.

**Camino Parry Sound:** An exciting pilgrimage week walking the shores of Georgian Bay and learning about its social, cultural, and geological history.

Arrive: Sunday, August 23 at 7:00 p.m.

Depart: Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup> after brunch

Cost: \$600/person all inclusive

For more information or to register, contact the Camino guide, Monica Moore at [revmonicamoore@gmail.com](mailto:revmonicamoore@gmail.com) or call St. James UC at 705-746-8553.

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.