

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Worship

Mar. 5th First Sunday in Lent

10:30 a.m. We receive ashes as a sign we have begun a time of reflection and prayer. We snuff out our first candle as we journey with Jesus. Each year at the beginning of Lent we hear about Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness. As he spent time in meditation and prayer he wrestled with his purpose. He experienced the temptation to deny the path he felt placed in his heart when he was baptized. We all wrestle with similar questions, wondering how best to be our true selves, to live into what it means to be a child of God. Scripture reading: Matthew 4:1-11 and a reading from Charles Dickens by *Nicholas Nickleby*. Message: "Being True to Your True Self" by Rev. James Ravenscroft.

12:00 Healing Service

Mar. 12th through April 2nd

10:30 a.m. Each Sunday of Lent we extinguish another candle in our mutual walk with Christ.

April 9th Palm / Passion Sunday

10:30 a.m. From the triumph of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to uncertainty as shadows gather.

Minister's Message

It's the most wonderful time of the year! At least for some. I'm referring not to Christmas but to Lent, a time for us to take stock of our lives, especially how we are doing in living out the message of Jesus in our day to day lives. The word for this season in English comes from the Old English for "lengthen", a reference to the lengthening of days as we head towards Spring. This points to what this season can be for us. Like what we see around us as the snow melts, the soil softens and spring flowers slowly start to appear, this is a time for us to seek release from whatever is holding back new life in our hearts. Over the course of this season as we choose to pray more, perhaps fast (give something up), donate alms, our hearts soften, enabling us to embrace the new life we celebrate at Easter. May this season be a holy time of letting go and opening up.

This Sunday, the First Sunday in Lent, those who wish will be given the opportunity to have a small cross in ash traced on their foreheads. Normally celebrated on Ash Wednesday (earlier this week), the worship committee decided to try something different and offer this way of beginning Lent as part of our Sunday worship. Part of Christian tradition since the first centuries of the common era, ashes were seen as a sign of grief and repentance. Ashes also remind us of the earth, a reminder of who we are and where we come from. Those who choose to participate will have a small cross traced on their foreheads as they hear these words: "Remember who you are and to whom you belong" in recognition that Lent is a time of self-reflection.

World Day of Prayer @ RHUC

Richmond Hill United Church is hosting World Day of Prayer 2017 on **Saturday March 4th at 2:00 pm**. The service is written by the World Day of Prayer Committee of The Philippines and is adapted for use in Canada by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. The Theme is "Am I Being Unfair to You?". Everyone is welcome. For more information please call June Blanchette 905 780 0048.

Youth Confirmation

Youth Confirmation (Reaffirmation of Faith): This coming Lent and Easter, we will be having preparation sessions for youth to reaffirm their baptismal faith (be confirmed). We will meet on Sundays after youth choir for about 90 minutes. Please bring your lunch. We will have an information session on March 5 and then begin formally after March Break. Let James know if you are interested.

Scripture readers

If you would like to participate in the worship service as a scripture reader, please contact Joan Verner at joanverner@rogers.com.

ENGAGING, CHALLENGING & GROWING OUR FAITH

Men's Breakfast

Richmond Hill United Church next Men's Breakfast will be on **Saturday, March 4th 2017**. Coffee and tea will be served at **8:15am**, with breakfast in the gym at 8:30 prepared by our UCW friends. New participants are always welcome. The Men's Breakfasts are a time of fellowship and camaraderie. Feel free to contact us if you're interested in more information about it. Cost is \$10 / person, with net proceeds to the UCW. Please RSVP to Harry Ramsaran (hramsaran@rogers.com 905 508 4758) by Thursday March 2nd.

After breakfast all are invited to the church parlor for a presentation by our guest speaker Gillian Hards. Gillian is the Cultural Services Coordinator for the Town of Richmond Hill. Gillian will introduce us to Richmond Hill's Cultural Plan, the plan's goals, and some of the exciting activities, projects, and initiatives that are underway to guide cultural development in Richmond Hill.

Prayer Shaw knitting

We will be gathering to knit or crochet prayer shawls again this year during Lent. Finished shawls are given to people who are unwell, grieving, moving away, and also to celebrate a birth or other special occasion as a way of showing that we care and hope the warmth of the shawl will give comfort and joy. Anyone who would like to be part of this ministry is invited to come **Thursdays March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6 and 13 in the Chapel, 5:00 to 6:00**. If this time does not fit into your schedule, please contact Donna Smith 905-884-6307 to see about arranging another time.

The UC Observer – renewal and new subscription time!

It is renewal and new subscription time! **Annual subscription cost: \$25/year. Due date: April 10th**. (11 monthly issues - the July/August summer issue is a combined one).

If you would like to renew or start a new subscription, payment by cheque for \$25, payable to Richmond Hill UC, can be put in the offering plate or brought to the office. Thank you!

RHUC Book Club

Please join us on **Wednesday, March 22 at 7 p.m. in the Chapel** to discuss **Under the Visible Life** by Kim Echlin. "Under the Visible Life takes readers from the bustling harbour of Karachi to the palpable political tension on the streets of 1970s Montreal to the smoky jazz clubs of New York City. Deeply affecting, vividly rendered, and sweeping in scope, it is also an exploration of the hearts of two unforgettable women: a meditation on how hope can remain alive in the darkest of times when we have someone with whom to share our burdens."

New members are always welcome to try us out. We are a friendly group and have wonderful, lively discussions. For more information, speak to Sandra Loughton or call the Church Office at 905.884.1301.

Getting to Know You

With all the boxes unpacked, Advent and Christmas well behind us and a routine slowly getting established, James would love to start getting to know people better. He's always up for a coffee or tea (and even a cookie). He'd love to come visit people in their homes, at local cafes, or even for a walk in the woods. He's open to individual, family and group visits. The key is a nice visit to get to know each other better. You can reach him by email at james@rhuc.org or by phone either at the church or on his cell – 647.705.2754.

During the month of March, **James will be hosting an open house on Mondays from 1 to 4 pm in his office**. Pop in for a coffee and tea.

Bible Study

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

This week Shalom Seekers will be continuing their discussion of **Christianity For The Rest of Us** with a focus on chapter Three. We will be looking at Diana Butler-Bass' understanding of The New Village Church. This book is a timely read as we begin to look forward to plans for RHUC in the future. Come join the conversation on Mondays in the chapel at 9:30am. For more info, speak to Dawn Moon, Peg Hiscoke or Sandra Loughton.

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.

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.)

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 **March 7 from 7:00 – 8:00 in the Chapel**.

BUILDING FOR MINISTRY

Cash Cards – RHUC Fundraiser!

Thank you for your order! \$154 was earned!

HOSPITALITY & WORKING FOR JUSTICE

In search of rocking chairs

Do you have a rocking chair at home that you've been thinking about donating? Consider donating it to the church. We are looking for one or two rocking chairs for the use of nursing moms and other adults with children. Thanks so much.

Minute for Mission *Called to be the Church*

Equipping a Child for School: Our gifts for Mission & Service support education. Let us hear a story from one of our global Mission & Service partners who works toward full inclusion of all children in Indian society. For most Canadian children a day off school is a cause for celebration. But for many children in India, an education is something they can only dream of. India remains a divided society with a clearly defined caste system. People in the lowest caste experience widespread discrimination and are often limited in the kinds of jobs open to them. They are usually relegated to low-paying and unstable work. Most families in these castes, many of them headed by women, live below the poverty line. Poor families struggle to survive. For many, survival depends on all members of the family working, including children. The most basic of school supplies are beyond their means, as are school uniforms and fees. In spite of government support programs, the school dropout rate for children living in poverty continues to increase. Imagine being stopped from continuing your education for the sake of a school bag, a notebook, a pen, and a geometry set. Recently, the Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation supported 520 children living in poverty to continue their secondary school education. Thanks to this support, 302 girls and 218 boys received basic school supplies, and their uniforms and school fees were covered. We sing thanksgiving that, through working with others, Mission & Service changes the dream of an education into a reality for children in India. If Mission & Service is already a regular part of your giving, thank you so much! If you have not given for Mission & Service, please join me in making Mission & Service a regular part of your life of faith. In all our Mission & Service giving, with a willing heart, we sing thanksgiving to God!

Lenten Givings

This year the focus of our **Lenten givings** will be **Doctors Without Borders or MSF Canada**. This excellent group of dedicated health professionals and volunteers spreads their efforts around the world through 70 active projects. Current highlights (or lowlights) are work with displaced people in the Syria/Lebanon/Jordan area, work in Northern Nigeria (the site of a recent bombing of a refugee camp) and helping in South Sudan where there is widespread famine. As our Advent givings supported the Toronto Native Women's Centre (over \$2000) we traditionally shift our support to a global project during Lent. We count on your support. Specially marked envelopes will be in the pews on three Sundays - March 5, 19 and 26.

Sock Hop was a success!

MANY THANKS! Thank you to all who supported our Feb 25th fundraiser for Stephen Lewis Foundation. Through the generosity of many we had a successful evening, raising over **\$3200 for SLF**. Our Crazy Sock contest had several winners for striped socks, pizza theme socks and pink dinosaur boots. Our quiz winner guessed the name of Katherine Johnson who received the President's Medal for her math expertise at NASA. We hope you will join us for our next fundraiser, a concert by the **Four Men** in early June.

CREATING AND NURTURING COMMUNITY

Research on Indigenous issues in Canada – thank you!

I just wanted to thank everyone who participated in the survey in the past couple of weeks. There were forty-two respondents which is amazing. There will be a finished product after the school year finishes available to the congregation. *Kiara Fabbro*

Quilting group

The **RHUC Quilters** will meet on **Saturday March 11th** in the Garden Room at 12:30. We will continue to work on our village quilt top. No quilting experience is necessary. If you like working with fabrics or fun colour matching, join us. All are welcome to bring a bagged lunch and tea will be available.

Blog post

Finding the Divine ~ RHUC'S Seventh Annual Women's Spirituality Retreat <https://rhucblog.wordpress.com/2017/02/08/finding-the-divine-rhucs-seventh-annual-womens-spirituality-retreat/>

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