More than brick & mortar

As a part of discerning what the next phase of life here at Richmond Hill might look like, the staff and residents are presently engaging in reflective work around the frameworks in which we operate. This exploration includes finding meaning in the symbolic, human resource, political and structural frameworks of the institution. It also involves exploring what it means to maintain our place of prayer, study and worship, both interiorly and exteriorly. There is something profoundly spiritual and endearing about meeting and trying to sort out together what’s necessary and important; to listen and learn from one another; or, to just simply conclude a meeting with something that will make a difference.

A stark contrast to the experience of this work is the reflective work I find myself doing in response to “I’m spiritual but not religious” — a phrase that is becoming increasingly common among those who wish to convey to others that they are in relationship with God but not affiliated with any particular denomination or faith tradition; or, as a justification for no longer being a part of a religious community of any sort.

The phrase connotes an individualistic perspective on spiritual development. It is also indicative of where we are as a society. Just as the community here is in search of meaning for its next institutional phase, the use of this phrase comes across as an individual’s framework for exploring the longing in their heart for a deeper meaning in life. It also comes across as a testament to the disappointment one may have in not finding a relevant message in institutional houses of worship and religion.

Maybe it’s the word “religion” itself that is tripping us all up. It’s a word that often conjures up memories of fundamental dogma propagated in religious institutions, which often serve to stunt individual spiritual development, or create walls of separation between individuals, as well as people groups. Usually a conversation around this topic includes a second somewhat common phrase — “the church is nothing more than brick and mortar.” Thankfully, this is a reference to church buildings and not the body of Christ.

It is not difficult to empathize with the one whose journey moves them away from organized religion because too much of what they have been taught, or believed, is no longer sufficiently true. However, careful listening reminds us that any organized entity of human life can be both empowering and frustrating. While religious traditions often lend themselves to error and abuse of power, in their best form and practices, they have been used for building community-creating safe, sacred and even fun spaces to teach children, as well as adults, how to live with others, learn more about themselves, and to grow in their relationship with God.

In consideration of this dichotomy, it is understood why some might find that responding to the longing in their heart is eased only by a period of separation. For, all too often, these same individuals find too much good in what they have to let go of altogether. Their memories provoke tension and at the same time convey that their places of worship are indeed “more than brick and mortar.” Perhaps on some deep level they know that too many good seeds were planted and taken root in their hearts there. Too much of what has been is fueling the longing for more. Our Christian tradition in particular has fueled and supported the understanding that longings of the human heart to know oneself and to know God is part of the human experience. Our holy scriptures remind us that to know God and Jesus Christ is to experience eternal life — that is to experience being alive in God, now and for always.

The leaving and returning process is intrinsic to spiritual development — whether it be returning to our roots or returning to ourselves. It is a work that sometimes requires aloneness. It is about getting in touch with the essence of who we are, what we have been taught and what we desire. It is about finding time and space to return to the part of ourselves that speaks truth and meaning — it is about being made whole.

The problem comes when one gets stuck in a comfortable “spiritual but not religious” mode, thinking that the aloneness is a place to stay. Growth happens most often when we are challenged. Seldom is there anything challenging about having...
deep thoughts all by oneself for long periods of time. The real work of spiritual development is best done in community, where other people might call us out on stuff or, heaven forbid, disagree with us. Community is where life gets provocative. It’s where we are provoked to dig into truths and traditions that we did not invent by ourselves or for ourselves. Being a part of a community is hard, but an ever evolving spiritual development work — hence, “more than brick and mortar.”

Besides, to be spiritual but not religious for the long haul seems to confine one’s life to a notion of always feeling good. But, no surprise to many of us, and inherent in the phrase itself, is the reality that our internal sense of feeling good is not always matched by our behaviors. Therefore, there is always the need for others to reflect to us the degree to which we are living out our truths. In short, we need community. Spiritual (religious) maturity is demonstrated when one can live with the tension of being a part of a group that you don’t always agree with — its positions or its practices. It is also demonstrated when we are willing to be examined or tested by others in the group. It takes faith to get there, and it takes faith to live there. Not only faith in God, but also faith in life itself as it moves us through a world of ebb and flows.

For those of us who claim to have intuited something greater than ourselves in our private moments, we must not ignore the intrinsically communal aspect of that which we discovered. To ignore this is to hold on to some perceived individual truth, which might demand that our personal individual desires supersede the goodness intended for us all. It may very well mean that we forget that private individual spaces do not hold the memories of holy encounters with and for others; which, by the way, feed our society with the beauty of truth and goodness revealed in human diversity and togetherness.

Together is harder, but its better. And the places we gather to do our work are more than brick and mortar.

**Rev. Janie M. Walker**  
**Co-Pastoral Director**

## TENDING THE SPIRIT

**1-2 Tending the Spirit,**  
Revive Richmond  
Community News

**3 Richmond at Prayer,**  
Celebrating the Spirit,  
In-Direction

**4-5 Retreats, Schools,**  
Prayer Cycle

**Group and Classes**

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**Stepping up**

Recently, I had lunch with Yvette Rajput, Director of the Armstrong Leadership Project. We were talking about hiking the Shenandoah when the conversation turned to providing high school youth opportunities to climb mountains themselves, literally and figuratively.

Yvette regularly informs her youth about relevant local events, providing transportation as needed. The Saturday prior to our conversation, it was a Richmond Teen Forum that provided an opportunity for teens and young adults to speak up about depression, bullying, social media, the juvenile justice system, and police shootings. A young woman named Chelsey took her up on an invitation and went along. When they arrived they discovered others from ALP already there.

Yvette encouraged Chelsey to mingle and take advantage of the many booths and presenters. At one point she told her that one of the exhibits was offering a contest with the top three contestants winning fully-loaded Samsung Chrome Books. Chelsey wandered over, but came back dejected. When Yvette asked her about it, Chelsea said that, yes, they were giving away computers, but you had to record a 15 second speech on why drugs and alcohol abuse is a problem — the most imaginative and compelling entrances would win.

“I couldn’t do that,” Chelsea said, discouraged. Yvette reminded her of her experience from last year in which she and others in ALP were coached on stage presence and personal expression. “You can do it!” Yvette reassured her, and with a gentle nudge Chelsey wondered back to the booth.

The festivities continued with plenty of sights to see and stories to be heard. At the end of the day, the Chrome Book winners were announced from numerous entries. Rather than read their names, their recordings were played for all to see.

“That’s not me, is it?” Chelsea asked in wonder as the first video aired. “Yes it is!” Yvette responded. She’d won, the recipient of her own laptop computer for stepping up and expressing herself.

The truth is, Chelsey was not the only winner that day. There were three. Two, it turned out, from Richmond Hill’s Armstrong Leadership Program.

There’s no telling what our youth are capable of accomplishing when loved, encouraged, and given the right tools to succeed. Just ask Chelsea. I suppose, once the word gets out, others will think twice before passing up an opportunity to go on a special outing with Ms. Yvette and the Armstrong Leadership Program.

**Rev. Joel Blunk**  
**Co-Pastoral Director**
Pray for Public, Non-profit, and Religious Social Service Work and Ministries in Metropolitan Richmond.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. (Matthew 25:35-36)

October 2, 2016. We pray for public, non-profit, and religious social service work and ministries in Metropolitan Richmond: For all in need of social services, all social service departments and caseworkers; for a partnership between the church and other institutions serving the needy.

October 9, 2016. We pray for public, non-profit, and religious social service work and ministries in Metropolitan Richmond: For all in need of mental health services, all mental health workers, counselors, and treatment facilities.

October 16, 2016. We pray for public, non-profit, and religious social service work and ministries in Metropolitan Richmond: For all who suffer from addiction, dependency or co-dependency of any sort, for twelve-step programs, recovery programs, therapists, and addiction counselors.

October 23, 2016. We pray for public, non-profit, and religious social service work and ministries in Metropolitan Richmond: For emergency shelters, women's shelters, clinics, and feeding programs; for recreation programs, youth programs, juvenile counseling, and young people's shelters.

October 30, 2016. We pray for public, non-profit, and religious social service work and ministries in Metropolitan Richmond: For advocates who fight for the rights of persons who cannot fight for themselves.

AVAILABLE NOW from the RICHMOND HILL BOOKSTORE

Richmond’s Unhealed History

by Benjamin Campbell

Ben’s book is available in a Kindle version for $5.99 at Amazon.com

$15.95 plus tax at Richmond Hill
or
$18.50 postpaid, tax included, by mail from Richmond Hill.

Your order from the Richmond Hill Bookstore supports Richmond Hill.

— Yvette Rajput, Director, and Marvin Roane, Assistant Director

Learn more about Armstrong Leadership Program through Yvette Rajput at 804-783-7903, ext. 13, or, alp@richmondhillva.org

The 2016 Leadership In Action Summer Institute culminated with a fun-filled day at Kings Dominion.
Retreats

**CENTERING PRAYER GROUPS**

Tuesdays, 4:45 - 5:45 p.m.
David Vinson, Facilitator
Tuesdays, 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.
Jerry Deans, Rev. Vallerie King, Facilitators

Centering prayer is an ancient prayer method designed to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer by preparing us to cooperate with this gift. Each group is open to newcomers regardless of experience.

Contact: David Vinson at 783-7903 or hospitality@richmondhillva.org

**DROP-IN GRIEF GROUP**

Monthly, 4th Fridays, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
Sandy Gramling, Ph.D., Facilitator

Share experiences and obtain support from others who are experiencing a loss in a flexible group format. Discussion and reflection on the impact of loss, coping, meaning-making, etc. follows the brief presentation.

Preregistration is helpful but not required. Contact DeBorah Cannady at 804-783-7903 to register.

**LYNCHING TO THE SILENCE**

Second Tuesday of Each Month | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Arrive at Richmond Hill at 8:45 to begin this spiritual experience. Lunch and chapel are included. Bring your Bible and your journal but leave the cell phone in the car.

Suggested Donation: $20 (includes Lunch) Facilitator: Rita Ricks, spiritual director

Contact DeBorah Cannady at Richmond Hill to register 804-783-7903 or retreats@richmondhillva.org

Please register in advance. Space is limited.

**THEOLOGY OF RACE**

Monday, October 24, 7:30 pm

This lecture will explore the theological underpinnings of race in our culture.

About the lecturer: Rev. Dr. John Kinney is the Dean of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, as well as the Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Beavercam, VA. Rev. Ben Campbell has said that Dean John Kinney very well may be one of the finest living Systematic Theologians.

This fall these lectures are scheduled for the last Monday of the month, as follows:

- **Monday, September 26**
  Race & Richmond’s History

- **Monday, October 24**
  Theology of Race

- **Monday, November 28**
  Race & Cultural Bias

The lecture will be followed by facilitated conversation and group processing time among the audience. Join us for worship at 5:30 pm, dinner at 6:30 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm.

Your donation of $20 includes both dinner and the lecture. For more information or to RSVP, please contact DeBorah Cannady at 804-783-7903, or by email: retreats@richmondhillva.org
Clergy Convocation

Come listen to prophetic voices of our time speak to the moral implications of poverty, housing, transportation, and education in metropolitan Richmond. Be inspired to lead your church to be the change we need for the soul of the city.

**8:00 am - 12:30 pm | in the Chapel at Richmond Hill**

Sign-up today: www.richmondhillva.org
DAILY PRAYERS
Morning 7:00 - 7:30 A.M.
Noon 12:00 - 12:15 P.M.
Evening 6:00 - 6:15 P.M.

COMMUNITY WORSHIP
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Every Monday
The community celebrates Holy Communion. Services are led by ministers of various denominations according to their traditions. We invite you to join us afterwards for dinner in the refectory.

PRAYING WITH THE SONGS OF TAIZÉ
Leader: Jim Bennett
7:30 p.m. first Monday of each month
Taizé worship is contemplative and meditative in character, using short songs, repeated again and again in a candle lit chapel. Using just a few words, the songs express a basic reality of faith, quickly grasped by the mind. As the words are sung over many times, the hope is this reality will gradually penetrate one’s whole being. Meditative singing thus becomes a way of listening to God.

We invite you to participate in our practice of Taizé which includes singing, prayer for Metropolitan Richmond, and a period of silence. Jim Bennett is a skilled musician and leads this time of worship with a variety of musical instruments.

SOAKING PRAYER SERVICE
DeBorah Cannady, Leader
3rd Mondays at 7:30 p.m. and 1st Thursdays at 10:00 a.m.
Those struggling with illness have benefitted from being “soaked in prayer” over periods of time. Prayer ministers are available to pray with those desiring emotional, spiritual, or physical healing. Participants are invited to find a comfortable place, sit, relax, and receive prayer. Participants may also come and go during the service.

EUCHARIST FOR GENERATIONAL HEALING
5th Mondays at 7:30 p.m.
Once a quarter, Richmond Hill offers a Eucharist for Generational Healing. Facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Paula O. Parker, this is an opportunity to invite God’s healing into your family, including the generations that have gone before and the generations that will come after you.

Please bring the blessings as well as the pains and traumas of your ancestry written on a piece of paper (not to be shared). For more information call DeBorah Cannady at 783-7903.

Worship Services
Retreats

Saturday, October 15
9 am – 4 pm, in the Art Space

The OPEN STUDIO retreat provides you the opportunity to spend a day at Richmond Hill deepening your spiritual and creative self.

For this creative endeavor you might want to bring your journal, notebook, or calendar. Copies of the Richmond Hill Rule of Life will be available to use as an example. You may also want to use color, symbols, quotes, pictures, and Scripture to personalize your Rule/Rhythm that you create.

Facilitator: Brenda Giannini hopes to open us to the sacred dimensions of our lives through the gifts of the visual arts. In this program, we look at various art forms throughout the year and create our own works of art in the prayerful quiet of Richmond Hill.

Suggested donation: $30.00 (includes lunch)
To register, please contact DeBorah Cannady, at (804) 783-7903 or by email: retreats@richmondhillva.org

Join our new co-pastoral director, Rev. Joel Blunk, for an Advent Retreat, December 2-4 at Richmond Hill. During this 48-hr. weekend we will provide space for reflection, prayer and preparation as we await the one who has already come.

Suggested donation: $180.00
To register, please contact DeBorah Cannady, at (804) 783-7903 or by email: retreats@richmondhillva.org
Grief Ministries at Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill has begun offering a broad program of Grief Ministries for the bereaved including a drop-in grief support group, retreats, and classes. Each offering has a unique emphasis but all share a common core regarding Who is it for, What we believe, and What to expect.

Grief ministries are for those who have lost a loved one recently or lost someone a long time ago. These ministries are for those who are growing through grief and those who feel left behind in an abyss of grief. Grief Ministries at Richmond Hill are for those who embrace (or would like to embrace) God, for those who do not trust God, and for those who cannot believe in God. Wherever you are in your grief journey, we want to offer a safe space for exploring where you are, what you need, and where you want to go.

We believe that God cares about you specifically in all of your unique pain and suffering, talents and gifts, hopes and desires, dreams and regrets. We believe that God cares about you in all of the should have, would have, could haves that may plague you; cares about you in all of your fears about the future and laments about what has been lost. While we believe that the Spirit of God, the comforter and advocate, is at work seeking to bring healing, comfort, and growth, you may find that hard to believe. We respect the beliefs and disbeliefs of all participants.

Loss often draws people into closer relationship with God. Yet for many experiencing the acute pain of loss there is often deep lament “Where is God?” or “How could a loving God let this happen?” Sometimes there is so much stress accompanying the loss who can even give God much thought? In our grief ministries you can expect a caring and non-judgmental atmosphere where it is safe to explore your thoughts and emotions about your loved one, yourself, and God. You will be with other people who know the unique challenges of losing a loved one. You will have the opportunity to talk about your loss and your difficulties in daily living while also listening and learning from those of others. You will have permission to grieve and permission to grow as you journey through the difficult terrain of bereavement.

Dr. Sandy Gramling
Coordinator of Grief Ministries

The work-around the work

There’s such a close connection between location and vocation. Listening to a good friend one morning as he shared an experience of his formation where he came to grips with feelings emerging from deep within — I realized how challenging it is to do a deep dive into the interior realm. It takes courage to go there. And it certainly takes guts to come back out and share whatever you uncovered. Recovered. Or discovered.

So...how does your location connect with your vocation? Vocation is a calling. If we are listening and paying attention, a response is elicited. Just like the physical universe, for every action there is a reaction. What exactly is the Call? Something you hear? Feel? See?

How do we react when we get the Call? Are we flat-footed? Or sure-footed?

Frequently, the locus of the Call lies embedded deeply within our selves. But who possesses the topographical map of their own soul? Over what inner distance or terrain does that Call have to travel before it registers in our consciousness?

Vocation can be cerebral, abstract, remote. Location is visceral, physical, concrete. Let’s look at some of the ways we interpret or discern where we are standing.

Here’s a short list of nine innate intelligences which are useful for locating where you are. Linguistic: the use of verbal language. Musical: create, communicate meaning made out of sound. Logical: use, appreciate abstract relationships. Spatial: perceive, transform, create images from memory. Kinesthetic: use all or part of the body to create, solve problems. Interpersonal: recognize, make distinctions about others feelings, intentions. Intrapersonal: distinguish meaning among one’s own feelings. Natural: distinguish among, classify, use features of the environment. Existential: raise philosophical questions regarding life’s meaning.

Whichever way you prefer to roll, identifying or recognizing a nudge is a critical first step in responding to your call. The more familiar you become with how you tick, the quicker you may be to react to the prompting of your call.

For ages, sailors have attached small strips of cloth to sails and stays on their boats. These flexible flags of fabric are known as “tell-tales,” and they indicate the presence (or absence) of the wind. Of course, since no one can actually see the wind, these tiny tools prove very useful in sailing, as well as moving yourself from point A to point B.

Where are the tell-tales in your soul? Have you discovered them? In sensing the teasing touch of RUAH (God’s breath) on your shoulder, can you tell where that Wind is coming from? And where you are heading? Make your map. Get a fix. Mark your location. And press on...into your calling.

Richard Rumble
Communications Director
October 2016

Metro Richmond at Prayer

In October:

Pray for Public, Non-profit, and Religious Social Service Work and Ministries in Metropolitan Richmond.

Share your comments, or sign up to receive our monthly UPDATE newsletter by emailing us your contact information: rrumble@richmondhillva.org

Richmond Hill is an ecumenical Christian fellowship and intentional residential community who serve as stewards of an urban retreat center within the setting of a historic monastery. Our Mission is to seek God’s healing of Metropolitan Richmond through prayer, hospitality, racial reconciliation and spiritual development.