

UPDATE



For the spirit of the city

2209 EAST GRACE STREET, RICHMOND, VA 23223

WINTER 2018-19

TENDING THE SPIRIT

A Child is Born

I asked Jabriel Hasan, a Richmond Hill resident and member of our Urban Service Corps, to proofread an earlier version of this article. Jabriel is a talented writer and I told him I wanted to convey something meaningful about the birth of Jesus and feared that what I'd written was heady and lacking. He read it, made some notes, then asked, "What would it take for you to write from your heart?" I replied, "I'd write from my own experience." Jabriel then asked, "What was it like to become a father?" He listened to my response and replied, "Now that's something I'd like to read at Christmas-time!"

Yet, how can I write and not allow anxiety to get in the way? Perhaps this question resonates for many this time of year. Too often worry goes hand in hand with the holidays, and we are certainly living in a time steeped in fear and anxiety.

Fear not is one of the most common lines in scripture. It appears throughout the Advent and Christmas story. "Fear not, Mary, for God has found favor with you (Luke 1:30)!" "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife... (Matt. 1:20)." And to the shepherds in the field, "Fear not, for I bring you good news of great joy (Luke 2:10)!"

I could have used a little "fear not" when I first learned I was going to be a father. The honeymoon was barely over when Kristen and I got the news. We knew where babies came from, but we sure didn't expect one so soon. But life is full of surprises; and God is often behind them. The due date? December 25.

I remember one evening early in our pregnancy, visiting my brother-in-law and his family in California, unable to sleep because our room was directly beneath my infant nephew's nursery. He cried loudly and incessantly the entire night. Exhausted, wide

awake, I found myself muttering "I don't want to be married. I don't want to have a baby. And I don't want to be here right now!" Funny what stress brings out in us. I was more than a little overwhelmed at the prospect of becoming a father.

The Advent story tells us that Joseph reacted quite differently. He accepted the news and stood up for Mary when others were ready to cast blame. He seemed to handle the situation with grace, rising to the occasion, being the man Mary needed. Perhaps the only similarity between my story and Joseph's was that we were both surprised to find we were expecting, even if for different reasons (Matt.1:18-20).

Nine months seems like plenty of time to get ready for a birth. Kristen and I, in good Advent fashion, began preparing for what was ahead. With the help of many, we borrowed a crib, set up a nursery, purchased our first washer and dryer, and developed a plan for the delivery, all the while, receiving all kinds of unsolicited advice. Still, I wasn't ready.

If all goes well, a woman carries her baby in utero for nine months straight. There is not a moment or a step she takes where that baby doesn't go with her. It is a full embodiment experience, so I am told. My nine-month preparation? It was in my head. There were moments, sometimes hours or days that I could forget or set aside what was coming. I knew it intellectually, but Kristen knew it in her heart, bones, and even in her cells.

The first time I carried our son, he was only minutes old. Looking down into his face I was suddenly overwhelmed with immense joy. And what was that other feeling? Trepidation. Uncertainty. What did I know about being a father? In that moment, I came up with nothing. Kristen had carried him for nine months and seemed ready for what was ahead. I'd carried him for only a few seconds and was sure I hadn't a clue.

My father and brother-in-law *continues on page 2*

*God provides us
with what we need
and works through us
in spite of ourselves.*

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Community and Staff

Co-Pastoral Directors

The Rev. Joel Blunk

jblunk@richmondhillva.org

The Rev. Janie Walker

jwalker@richmondhillva.org

Administrator

Tim Holtz

administrator@richmondhillva.org

Spiritual Guidance Coordinator

Deborah Cannady

dcannady@richmondhillva.org

Retreat Coordinator

Mary Lewis

retreats@richmondhillva.org

Development Director

Debbie Winans

development@richmondhillva.org

Communications Director

Richard Rumble

rrumble@richmondhillva.org

Communications Specialist

Sheryl Johnson

Facilities Coordinator

David Vinson

facilities@richmondhillva.org

Hospitality Coordinator

Sunny Riggs

hospitality@richmondhillva.org

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TENDING THE SPIRIT

were waiting outside the delivery room. I carefully walked up to them, held out my son to introduce "Clayton Palmer Blunk", but the lump in my throat rendered me speechless. I was over-joyed, but utterly and completely unprepared to carry this baby, despite my head-knowledge that this child had long been on his way.

Somewhere in life, we are told that God never gives us more than we can handle. I've learned over the years to trust that, even though in this case I wasn't so sure. Yet along that hospital hallway, it happened. I made the move from head to heart. I'm sure it had everything to do with holding him in my arms and experiencing the Creator's hand in this nine-plus pound, chinless child. He was real. Being a father was real. It was no longer something discussed or imagined. Clay was here. Right before my eyes. And quickly, something softened in me. I began to surrender to the responsibility before me.

"What changed?" Jabriel asked. "I made the choice to accept my role as father," I replied. A smile came across Jabriel's face. "Yes," he said, "that's the way it works."

God calls us to something and we're sure we're not up to it, we don't have what it takes. We're certain we lack the tools, the ability needed. But then, somehow, transformation takes shape. We manage, and often even thrive. God provides us with what we need and works through us in spite of ourselves. The scriptures are full of examples, regular people with limitations who God uses anyway. People like Moses and Sarah, Peter and Mary. People like you, like me.

This Christmas season we celebrate again the birth of a child. We wait and watch for one who has already come. And recognizing his arrival - perhaps in one another - we're given the chance to carry him ourselves and acclaim that the "light of the world" has come.

Rev. Joel Blunk

Co-Pastoral Director

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REVIVE RICHMOND

Revival in Education

Near the beginning of his recent weekly update, Jason Kamras, wrote, "...regardless of when and how we got here, this is now my responsibility and I will take every necessary step to ensure our transcripts are 100% accurate - and remain that way. Accomplishing this is going to take thousands of people-hours. As a result, we may have to deprioritize some other things. I ask for your grace in advance if you reach out to me about another issue and my response is: 'I promise you we will get to it, but we're going to need more time.'" A breath of fresh air indeed!

Recent reports on the state of affairs for Richmond Public Schools called for such forthrightness, sense of responsibility and commitment. It's indeed heartening to read this kind of response when the population at stake is made up of so many young people who are powerless to act on their own behalf, and who depend on leaders in the educational system to make the best decisions possible to affect their lives.

This is a reminder that revival is not limited to our religious circles. Rather, true revival effects all aspects of our life. Along with religion, education is named in some religious circles as one of seven spheres of influence in our society. (The other five are: family, government, media, arts & entertainment and business.) While all of us may not fully agree on what constitutes excellence in these spheres, none of us can deny that they all warrant our continued and diligent attention. What we all know about any educational environment is: even before students are given any instructional information, they are impacted by the ideologies, principles and values of the educational leaders who influence their lives. So when an educational system is faltering, it is good to see a superintendent, with such transparency, lay out facts, errors made and proposed processes for resolution.

Other things to appreciate about Superintendent Kamras' update are: the FAQ'S openly reveal the potential impact of the audit report; the decision to hold Q&A sessions for students, families, and members of the public; a commitment to review and clarifying data that constitutes credits for graduation; proposals to advocate for more resources from the Commonwealth of Virginia; and a personal commitment to participate in the events scheduled.

Lastly, it is good that the audit report did not overshadow what's good and right about RPS-- outstanding teachers and administrators still get to be celebrated; the priorities released in September are still in line with proposed resolutions; and values important to excellence in education are alive and in operation. All of these things serve to remind us that working together is the only way to affect a much needed educational revival.

Rev. Janie M. Walker
Co-Pastoral Director

Pray to Overcome in Christ's Name the Heritage of Racism in Metropolitan Richmond.

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

January 2019

January 6, 2019. We pray to overcome in Christ's name the heritage of racism: For the elimination of discrimination in living patterns, public education, employment, political jurisdiction, transportation, and churches in Metropolitan Richmond.

January 13, 2019. We pray to overcome in Christ's name the heritage of racism: To experience the victory of Jesus' resurrection over all personal and institutional results of racism and racial inequity in this metropolitan city.

January 20, 2019. We pray to overcome in Christ's name the heritage of racism: To overcome ignorance, indifference, resentment, and bitterness with regard to race in both private and public life.

January 27, 2019. We pray to overcome in Christ's name the heritage of racism: To proclaim in word and deed the establishment of a beloved community in Metropolitan Richmond.



Gift ideas:

**Prayer Books,
Beads, and
Blessing Bands**

*make thoughtful,
wonderful gifts...on
sale in the Richmond
Hill Bookstore*

Why not give that special someone you love a gift certificate to Richmond Hill? The certificate could be used for a retreat, a program, or for items from the bookstore. To get your certificate, contact Debbie Winans at 804-783-7903, ext. 22

**Give A
Richmond
Hill Gift
Certificate**

ALP – On the Move!

We've been busy with empowering and exciting activities. Here is a brief look into what's going on.

University of Richmond Peer Mentoring Network has mixed in with our students very nicely. Every Monday, the college students engage with the Leadership students at the school. They offer academic and personal support as our young people navigate through the complexities of high school.

Also, the **Stage Write** program has begun. Students write, prepare and rehearse their truths as they share their stories of transformation and resilience in a performance along with other high school students in Richmond in May. Along with support on workforce readiness with **Capital One**, students gain interviewing skills and personal presence.

A huge thank you to **Christine Carmichael** of **Flemings Etiquette** on the first etiquette training with our students. Students had the opportunity to learn how to conduct themselves in business and professional settings.

The Autumn Social Gathering was held at **Six Points Innovation Center** in October. We appreciate all who showed up for fellowship despite the poor weather. Students were matched with mentors, painted word rocks and pumpkins, lead dance routines and participated in the fun and games.

We were pleased to participate in the pre-election discussion with candidates for the 7th District School Board. A special thank you to the moderator, **Toria Edmonds-Howell** and **Principal Dr. Willie Bell** and his staff for allowing time and space for this event to take place.

We would like to send out a huge thank you to those individuals who have signed up to mentor and/or donate funds to the program. Your efforts and support are truly appreciated!

If you are interested in participating, please contact

Yvette Davis Rajput, Director

at work: 804-783-7903, ext. 13,
or cell 804-314-2622, or: yrajput@richmondhillva.org

Marvin Roane, Assistant Director

cell 804-484-0736, or: alp@richmondhillva.org

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Richmond Hill Studies in

Retreats

Classes

Groups

Schools

Retreats

Classes

RETREATS

INDIVIDUAL RETREATS

Richmond Hill offers individual retreats for persons who desire rest and time to seek God. Retreats may be taken in 24-hr increments between Tue. 4 p.m. – Sun. 4 p.m. In addition, more formal contemplative retreats are offered periodically on weekends for individuals who wish to be a part of a facilitated retreat rhythm. Spiritual guidance is available for any individual retreat.

Recommended donations: Basic \$80 per 24 hrs. / Guided \$100 per 24 hrs.

Contact Mary Lewis, 804-783-7903 or retreats@richmondhillva.org

FIRST FRIDAY RETREATS

First Friday of Each Month | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

A day for quiet reflection and spiritual renewal. Structure and guidance will be provided for those who want it as well as the option for one-on-one spiritual direction, or you can simply spend the day in silence—your choice.

Suggested Donation: \$20 (includes Lunch) Facilitator: Mimi Weaver, spiritual director and life coach. She can be reached at www.GraceMoves.com

*Contact DeBorah Cannady at Richmond Hill to register 804-783-7903 or retreats@richmondhillva.org
Please register in advance. Space is limited.*

LISTENING 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.*

GROUPS

CENTERING PRAYER GROUPS

Tuesdays, 4:15 - 5:00 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 804-783-7903 or facilities@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 Mary Lewis at 804-783-7903 to register.

Connect creatively with your spirit



Slip into the spiritual rhythm of prayer and quiet here. Enjoy personal time with your creative self. Connect with your inner spirit while using your creativity.

To register, please contact Mary Lewis, at (804) 783-7903 or email: retreats@richmondhillva.org
Facilitator: Brenda Giannini. Suggested donation: \$30.00 (includes lunch)

JOIN US

== KOINONIA == School of Race & Justice

"CALLED TO BE RECONCILERS"

Day Seminar

Jan. 19

Sat. 9 am – 4 pm

Please join us for the third event in our annual Koinonia series of retreats and lectures focused on race and justice.

Koinonia is designed to equip people in three ways: by engaging in transformative, self-reflective work; by teaching dialogue skills for handling tough conversations; and by preparing participants for social justice engagement with the wider community.

Retreats and seminars include guest presenters, small group discussions, community engagement and time for personal reflection. Topics include the history and theology of race, recognizing the signs of systemic racism and implicit bias, and Non-Violent Communication.

Day seminar: \$50.

To register, call (804) 783-7903
or email retreats@richmondhillva.org.



RETREATS

Brother Lawrence

RETREAT

JAN 8-10

Tuesday-Thursday



Join us for 48 hours of monastic living in the spirit of Brother Lawrence who found the presence of God in the simple tasks of cleaning. The retreat will follow the normal rhythm of life at Richmond Hill including daily prayers, time for reflective work, meals together, and a comfortable place to sleep. Between prayers in the Monte Maria chapel, there will be an opportunity to prayerfully participate in simple tasks to help with our winter cleaning; sweep the kitchen floor, wash the refectory windows, dust the woodwork in the cloister.

Brother Lawrence, a 15th century Parisian monk, wrote in his letters, "that we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed."

There is no cost for this retreat. Your service to Richmond Hill will cover your room and board while with us. *The retreat begins with Community Worship on Tuesday evening and concludes at 4 PM on Thursday.*

Space is limited.

To apply please visit our website or contact Mary Lewis at 804-783-7903 or retreats@richmondhillva.org by **Friday, January 4, 2019.**

WORSHIP SERVICES

DAILY PRAYERS

Morning 7:00 - 7:15 a.m.

Noon 12:00 - 12:15 p.m.

Evening 6:00 - 6:15 p.m.

COMMUNITY WORSHIP

Every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

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

*First Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. * (No Taizé service January 1, 2019)*

Jim Bennett, Leader

Taizé worship is contemplative and meditative in character, using short songs, repeated again and again in a candlelit chapel. The songs express a basic reality of faith, quickly grasped by the heart. The hope is this reality will gradually penetrate one's whole being; thus the meditative singing becomes a way of listening to God. Our practice of Taizé includes singing, prayer for Metropolitan Richmond, and a period of silence. Jim Bennett, a skilled musician, leads this time of worship with a variety of guest musicians and instruments.

SOAKING PRAYER SERVICE

DeBorah Cannady, Leader

1st Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. and 4th Tuesdays at 7:30 p.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.

GENERATIONAL HEALING SERVICE

5th Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

Rev. Dr. Paula O. Parker, Leader

Once a quarter, Richmond Hill offers a service for Generational Healing. This is an opportunity to invite God's healing into your family, including generations that have gone before, as well as generations that will come after you. Participants are encouraged to bring the blessings as well as the pains and traumas of their ancestry written on a piece of paper (not to be shared). However, careful preparation of your personal genogram will help you pray more specifically for your family members.

MEN'S CIRCLE: PRACTICING THE WAY OF COUNCIL

2nd Thursdays, 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Rev. Joel Blunk, Leader

Men of all ages and stages of life are invited to participate in this monthly gathering at Richmond Hill to practice The Way of Council, an ancient spiritual practice of storytelling and deep conversation. The process is simple. Plenty of silence creates spaciousness for meaning—both spoken and unspoken—to be offered and received. We hold the space with intention. The time is closed with a prayer, a group gesture or a few moments more of silence.

NOTICES

Special Date Notices:

Praying with the Songs of Taizé



There is no Taizé service Tuesday, January 1, 2019.

There is a 48-hr. Taizé Retreat scheduled for March 29-31, 2019.



REQUEST A DISCERNMENT CIRCLE

Need help navigating a life transition? Richmond Hill is pleased to offer another practice to assist you with discerning God's direction for your life. Discernment Circles, or Clearness Committees as they are called in the Quaker tradition, offer safe space in the company of trusted others for listening deeply to what needs to be heard. Several from our Richmond Hill community are now trained in the process and available upon request to hold sacred space for you.

To schedule a circle, contact DeBorah Cannady at 804-783-7903 or dcannady@richmondhillva.org.

What legacy will you leave?

When you consider your legacy, you think of the people, lives and experiences that have shaped you, as well as the lives you have influenced. As you contemplate your legacy, please consider a bequest to Richmond Hill.

So many of us feel we can only afford to donate a limited amount to charity from year to year. But including Richmond Hill in your long-term plans may enable you to do more than you thought possible. In 1990, a friend of Richmond Hill bequeathed a generous legacy gift that was just recently received. While we mourn her passing, we also celebrate her life and her long-planned contribution to Richmond Hill.

Estate gifts are simple to establish and allow you the financial flexibility to adjust your plans depending on your needs. Your financial adviser can help you designate Richmond Hill as a beneficiary. Please be sure to send us a copy of any paperwork so we may know how to fulfill your wishes when your gift arrives.

Leaving a portion of your estate to Richmond Hill creates a lasting legacy. A legacy that will help tomorrow's spiritual leaders benefit from Richmond Hill just as you did. A legacy that will help shape metropolitan Richmond for the better.

To start a legacy conversation, please contact Debbie Winans at 804-783-7903 or development@richmondhillva.org.

Walking on WATER

A Retreat on Courage,
Trust, and Readiness

4 pm Friday, Feb. 1 – 4 pm Sunday, Feb. 3

Reflecting on Peter's discipleship, Joel and Leslie will lead us on journeys of our own to consider what it would mean for us to walk on water.

What's God calling us to today? • What unique gifts or abilities do each of us have that the world needs? • How has "mending our nets" and then "laying down those nets" helped prepare the way for recognizing when it's time to "walk on water?" • What would it mean for you to walk on water now? • What risks are involved? • What fears—or unfinished business—stand in your way? • What's at stake if you never venture out of the boat?

These and similar questions will guide our time together which will include storytelling, solitude, the way of council, music, worship, poetry, and prayer.

Cost: \$220. **Space is limited.** To apply please visit our website or contact Mary Lewis at retreats@richmondhillva.org by **Friday, January 25**. (CEUs available for some professions.)

Facilitators: Leslie Shiels, VCU Professor & Rev. Joel Blunk

"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."
— Matthew 14:28

Come ready to:

- *experience the healing power of storytelling*
- *discover courage and strength for faithful living*
- *rest*
- *envision a soul task uniquely your own*
- *know again that you belong*



2209 East Grace Street
Richmond, Virginia 23223
(804) 783-7903
www.richmondhillva.org

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January 2019



Metro Richmond at Prayer

In January:

**Pray to Overcome in Christ's Name the Heritage
of Racism in Metropolitan Richmond.**

RICHMOND HILL MISSION STATEMENT

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.

RICHMOND HILL'S DAILY CYCLE OF PRAYER

Pray for Metropolitan Richmond Every Day: For the healing of metropolitan Richmond; for the sick and those in our hearts; for the welfare of all our citizens; for the establishment of God's order in our community.

MONDAYS: Our citizens who live in the City of Richmond, the Mayor, Manager, City Council, and School Board. Non-profit organizations and their ministries. All schools: students, teachers, and staff. Day care centers. All who suffer from addiction, dependency, and co-dependency. The Council, residents, and staff of Richmond Hill.

TUESDAYS: Our citizens who live in Hanover County, the Board of Supervisors, School Board, and Manager. The print and broadcast media. The churches of metropolitan Richmond: members and clergy. All who live in poverty. All who suffer from mental illness.

WEDNESDAYS: The Governor of Virginia, the General Assembly, and all who work in State Government. All who work in businesses which provide services to others. All who work in construction. Hospitals and nursing homes: patients, residents, and staff; all who provide health care. Victims of violent crime; all who commit violent crime. All senior citizens.

THURSDAYS: Our citizens who live in Ashland, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, and Petersburg, the town and city Councils and Managers. All who work in banks and finance; all making financial decisions for greater Richmond. Prisons and jails of metropolitan Richmond: prisoners and staff. All who are unemployed or underemployed. All public servants.

FRIDAYS: Our citizens who live in Henrico County, the Supervisors, School Board, and County Manager. All who work in the manufacturing industry in metropolitan Richmond. The police, fire, and rescue workers. The courts. All

young people. All who hurt, need inner healing, or are unable to love.

SATURDAYS: Our citizens who live in Chesterfield County, the Supervisors, School Board, and County Manager. All who work in retail trade in metropolitan Richmond, and those who own our businesses. Counselors and spiritual directors. The Sisters of the Visitation of Monte Maria. All victims of abuse; all perpetrators of abuse.

SUNDAYS: Our citizens who live in the Counties of Charles City, Goochland, Powhatan, and New Kent, the Supervisors, School Boards, and Managers. An end to racism and racial prejudice. All places of prayer or worship: churches, mosques, and synagogues. Universities, colleges, and technical schools. All who seek God.

We pray daily at Richmond Hill for persons or situations for which our prayers are requested. Call us at 804-783-7903.

Share your comments, or sign up to receive our monthly printed UPDATE newsletter here: rrumble@richmondhillva.org
If you would like to subscribe to eUPDATE, our email newsletter, go here: www.richmondhillva.org/subscribe/

You can find us, like us, share us: **facebook:** RichmondHillVa **twitter:** RichmondHillVa2 **instagram:** richmondhillva

