



RICHMOND HILL — FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE CITY UPDATE | SPRING 2020

TENDING THE SPIRIT

Staying Connected

These are unprecedented times for sure. The coronavirus pandemic has us all on edge and forced to rethink what it means to be community and the body of Christ today. Who would have thought our churches would be closed, Sunday worship canceled, or that we would be told to distance ourselves from one another in order to survive? And who could have predicted that Richmond Hill, committed to offering hospitality to strangers and friends alike, would have to close our doors? But that is the situation we find ourselves in, at least for the time being. We've got to think and act creatively in order to stay connected and maintain our sense of community across the distance.

In the sixth century, Western Europe was in turmoil. Wars and insurrections, pandemics and plagues threatened life. It was a time of demographic, cultural, and economic deterioration following the decline of the Roman Empire. Life was endangered on many fronts. In that context, a man named Benedict of Nursia wrote a simple Rule of Life that he hoped would help bring people together around the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was an attempt to form community in a world that seemed incapable of it. Interestingly, it changed the shape of Christianity for centuries to come. Many credit St. Benedict with saving Christian Europe from the ravages of the Dark Ages. At that time, it provided an enclave for intellectual, spiritual and even technological innovation to occur.

Not everyone, though, could live in the monastic communities separate from the chaos of the

surrounding cities and country sides. But many were drawn to the simple life of prayer, devotion and focused existence monastic life offered. So, an alternative form of connection was created, allowing those who wanted to be in relationship with the community from afar to offer themselves to the rule from their separate contexts. They became known as "oblates," which in Latin means "to make an offering of oneself." Those unable to live in the com-

munity could, from afar, offer themselves humbly to the same principles and practices they admired in the monasteries they visited. In turn, the monastery would support them through prayer, encouragement, as a place of occasional retreat, and by example.

This seems like a time ripe for us to offer something similar from Richmond Hill. Many of you already operate in relationship to us in a similar way. We've been wondering what it would look like to formalize that by creating a program to help you maintain a connection with our rhythm of life and mission to the city from a distance? Certainly, the healing

we seek and the need for racial reconciliation we work toward calls for more of us than just the twelve who live here to pray and act. We're in this together. While the residential community is the heart of Richmond Hill, our community extends well beyond our walls. We want you to join us intentionally and formally in this work from where you are, especially during this extended time of social distancing. Partnership is needed.

What would a Richmond Hill oblate program look like? Traditionally, Benedictine spirituality involves a commitment to three guiding principles: stability, obedience, and conversion. These three things are foundational, yet often mis-

continues on p. 2

*What structure
might allow us
to be and become
the best that God
created us to be?*

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TENDING THE SPIRIT

understood. *STABILITY* is more than a long-term decision to stay in place, it refers to the location of our heart. Am I committed to the best things, to God's love and goodness? Stability is grounded in relationship and in a life grounded in God. My stability is measured by my commitment to God first, regardless of where I am and what I am doing; consequently, the latter are informed by the former. *OBEDIENCE*, while often negatively associated with doing what we're told to do, according to Benedict is about listening, paying attention, turning one's ear to God's voice. To be obedient takes discernment and the help of community. Listening for God involves listening to one another God through whom God is made known. Finally, *CONVERSION* refers to the constant openness to becoming. We are to remain "clay in the potter's hands," our lives open to being shaped and molded by God's love. All these things require vulnerability, openness, and trust.

Each of these principals appear in the Richmond Hill Rule of Life too, defined in our context and helping to guide our life together. A Richmond Hill oblate program would build upon these three core tenets of Benedict, and the other aspects of our Rule of Life, to help partners like you to create your own rule for your own circumstances.

A Rule of Life is like a trellis. It provides a framework upon which life can grow. It provides structure for us to be and become the best that God created us to be. In addition to the foundational principles of stability, obedience and conversation of life, there are practices that oblates embrace along with the community with which they seek to maintain connection. In our case, as a Richmond Hill Partner, you are invited to embrace our mission to seek the healing of metropolitan Richmond through prayer, hospitality, racial reconciliation and spiritual development within your own community and context. What would that look like for you?

Here's a place to start.

1. **Praying the Liturgy of the Hours** incorporating prayers for metropolitan Richmond
2. **Practicing compassion** in your dealings with others and toward God's creation
3. **Working for justice** particularly in regard to issues of race in your own home, neighborhood and place of work
4. **Taking on a contemplative practice** to help you pay attention to God's presence in your everyday life and to help you move toward unitive consciousness
5. **Remaining true to the practices** of your local church or faith community

In this issue of the *UPDATE*, we offer you the invitation to become a Richmond Hill Partner in our common mission. In the following pages you'll find opportunities to connect on-line, tools for developing your contemplative practice, resources to support you in prayer and action, and encouraging words for getting started.

St. Benedict, upon laying out his simple rule of life, reassured his readers and those who might join him in his experience of community that there would be "nothing harsh or burdensome." This invitation is not meant to weigh you down but pick you up during this uncertain time of isolation, risk, and understandable fearfulness. In partnership, we offer ourselves to one another and to God, trusting in God's care and the potential for God's desires to be realized among us now, even at a distance.

Rev. Joel Blunk
Co-Pastoral Director

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Pray for the Criminal Justice System in Metropolitan Richmond.

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. (Hebrews 13:3 ESV)

May 2020

May 3, 2020. We pray for the criminal justice system in Metropolitan Richmond: For all who are incarcerated in jails and prisons, their families, and their loved ones.

May 10, 2020. We pray for the criminal justice system in Metropolitan Richmond: For the police, judges, lawyers and court personnel, correctional officers and institutions, juvenile detention facilities, and probation officers.

May 17, 2020. We pray for the criminal justice system in Metropolitan Richmond: For all chaplains, staff and volunteers who minister in jails and prisons, half-way houses, work-release and after-care programs.

May 24, 2020. We pray for the criminal justice system in Metropolitan Richmond: For the victims of violent crime and for those who perpetuate violent crime. For situations and institutions that condone, promote or encourage violent behaviors.

May 31, 2020. We pray for the criminal justice system in Metropolitan Richmond: For just institutional policies and programs that foster restorative practices, leading to wholeness and healing.

Pray for the Churches & Religious Institutions of Metropolitan Richmond.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Cor. 12:12-14 ESV)

June 2020

June 7, 2020. We pray for the Churches and religious institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For all who seek God on behalf of others; for pastors, ministers, missionaries, lay leaders, congregants, intercessors and other servants of Christ.

June 14, 2020. We pray for the Churches and religious institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For all religious communities, abbeys, orders, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, religious societies, and para-church organizations.

June 21, 2020. We pray for the Churches and religious institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For seminaries, bible colleges, and schools training persons for vocations in ministry; for the students, faculty, and staff of these institutions.

June 28, 2020. We pray for the Churches and religious institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For a spirit of unity, mutuality, cooperation, reconciliation, reform, and common ministry within the faith community.

Stay Positive, Peaceful & Productive

We hope all is well and each of you are doing your best to stay that way! Immediately after school was closed, we created a Zoom account so that we could continue to stay connected with our students. On this platform, we have been able to provide pertinent information, encourage safe practices, conduct daily check-ins and provide sessions with some of our partners. Their unwavering support has been much appreciated as our students process their disappointment, anxiety and uncertainty. Actually, the Zoom conferences have been fun with sharing, music, laughter, prayer, mindfulness activities and love hugs. Shout outs to the following supporters: **Dantavius Ballou, Karen Salter, Dick Commander, Kiran Bhagat, Mr. Chambers, Ms. Jordan and Mr. Knight** from Armstrong High School. They were instrumental for the special Senior Meeting to discuss college plans, scholarships and financial aid. It truly takes a village and we are so excited for our seniors! Most have decided on their colleges (ODU, JMU, VUU, VA State, Richard Bland and Reynolds).



Also, we offer a shout out to the University of Richmond Peer Mentors who have joined in on sessions and created virtual tutoring assistance for the students. Although we are all challenged with coping with this pandemic, you can imagine how scary it is for our students who are having to work at grocery stores and restaurants, help provide for their families, and caring for younger siblings while staying on top of their studies so that they can move to the next grade and graduate in June. This is especially challenging for our seniors who were getting prepared to select colleges, finish scholarship applications, and were making plans for the future. We are still planning to acknowledge the graduates and would like to match them with churches and organizations who can help with providing a College Shower for those who are leaving for college in August. Please let me know if you would like to assist in any way.

At this critical time, our main focus is to encouraging students to use masks or facial covering when they are in the public, practice social distancing and wash their hands as often as possible. A special thank you to **Janet Legro, Chef Jason and First Presbyterian Church** for preparing hot meals for the families of our students. Also, thanks to **Kristen Blunk** for using her skills to make beautiful masks.

We will continue to challenge our students to push themselves and to never stop learning, growing, thinking, reflecting and most importantly loving themselves and others. Join us on the 21-day SELF-LOVE challenge. The challenge is designed to assist students and staff to reflect upon ways they can show love to themselves. Remember "If you can't go outside, GO inside" and never stop Dreaming, Believing and Achieving.

We appreciate all the phone calls and emails to check in on the students. Your thoughtfulness has touched us all deeply. If you would like to connect with us, be sure to visit our new Instagram page @armstrongleadershipprogram and don't forget to like us on Facebook @armstrongleadership.

In gratitude, Yvette and Marvin

If you are interested in participating in the Armstrong Leadership Program, 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, 804-484-0736,
 or alp@richmondhillva.org

Like Us on Facebook @ArmstrongLeadership

Some Helpful Spiritual Practices

Lectio Divina: Divine Reading – Rev. Dr. Lisa Johnson

Spiritual Discipline: Lectio Divina — this is a divine reading. It is an ancient Christian practice of praying the scriptures. It is a spiritual practice in listening and praying. My suggestions:

- **Spend a few minutes settling down**, find a place of calm. Don't fight thoughts, just let them come and let them float away; take your time, there's no need to rush.
- **Select a scripture that you will read from.** I recommend starting small — for example: Isaiah 35:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; you can build up and read more later
- **Pray that your heart will be open and receptive** to what God wants to say to you in this experience. Take 3 or 4 deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Pay attention to your breathing, taking time to settle and let your thoughts float away. Focus on your breathing and allow it to become your place of grounding.
- **You will read your scripture three times:**
 - First reading:* you are reading just to get familiar with the text;
 - Second reading:* listen for words or phrases that resonate with you; write down anything that grabs your attention;
 - Third reading:* ask the Lord what He is saying to you, specifically, through this scripture; if you didn't get a word, ask the Lord to give you a word — don't discount ANYTHING that gives you life and hope; yes, the Lord wants to speak to you!
- **Read the scripture again** with the awareness of the Lord's message to you and soak in the word or phrase that the Lord has given you.
- **Be blessed!** – Rev. Dr. Lisa Johnson, Interim Co-Pastoral Director

Centering Prayer: An Introduction

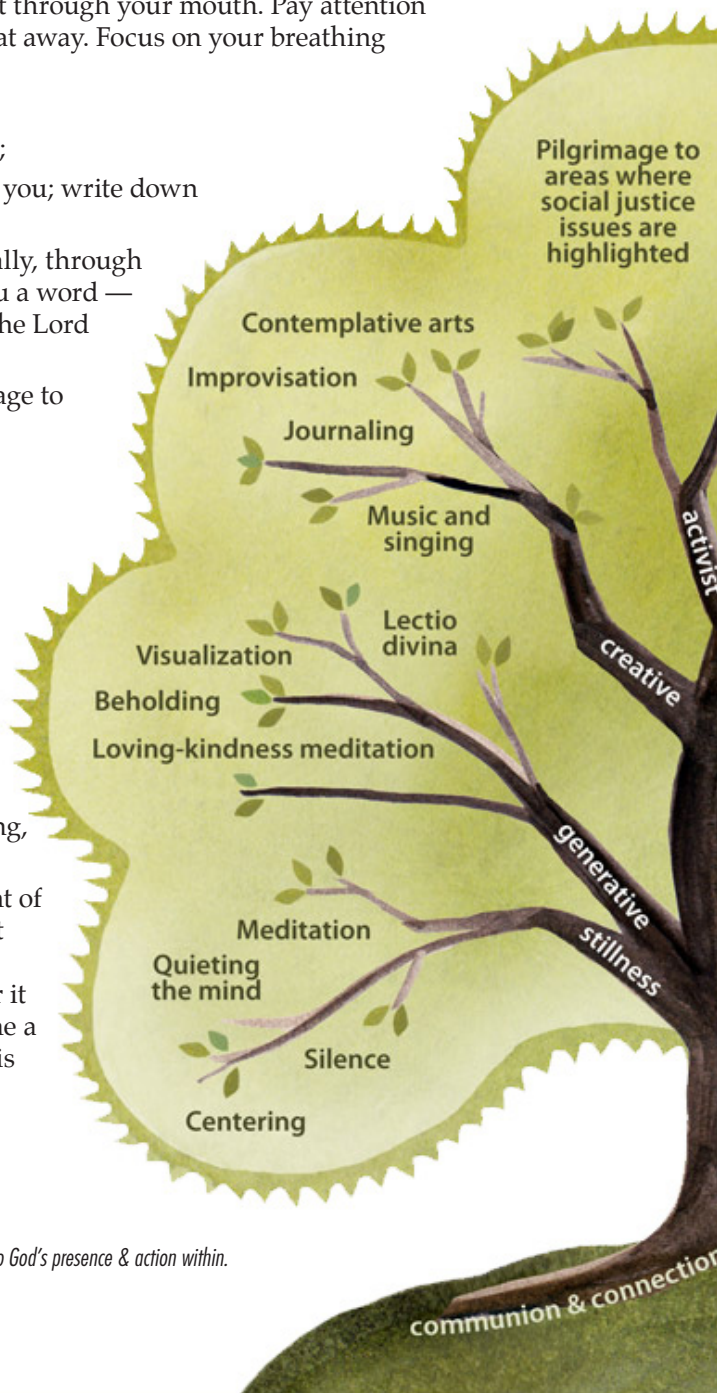
Contemplative Prayer: We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words. But this is only one expression. In the Christian tradition contemplative prayer is considered to be the pure gift of God. It is the opening of mind and heart — our whole being — to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. Through grace we open our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing, closer than consciousness itself.

Centering Prayer is a method designed to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer by preparing our faculties to receive this gift. It presents ancient Christian wisdom teachings in an updated form. Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer; rather it casts a new light and depth of meaning on them. It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. This method of prayer is a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with him.

A few Guidelines for Centering Prayer

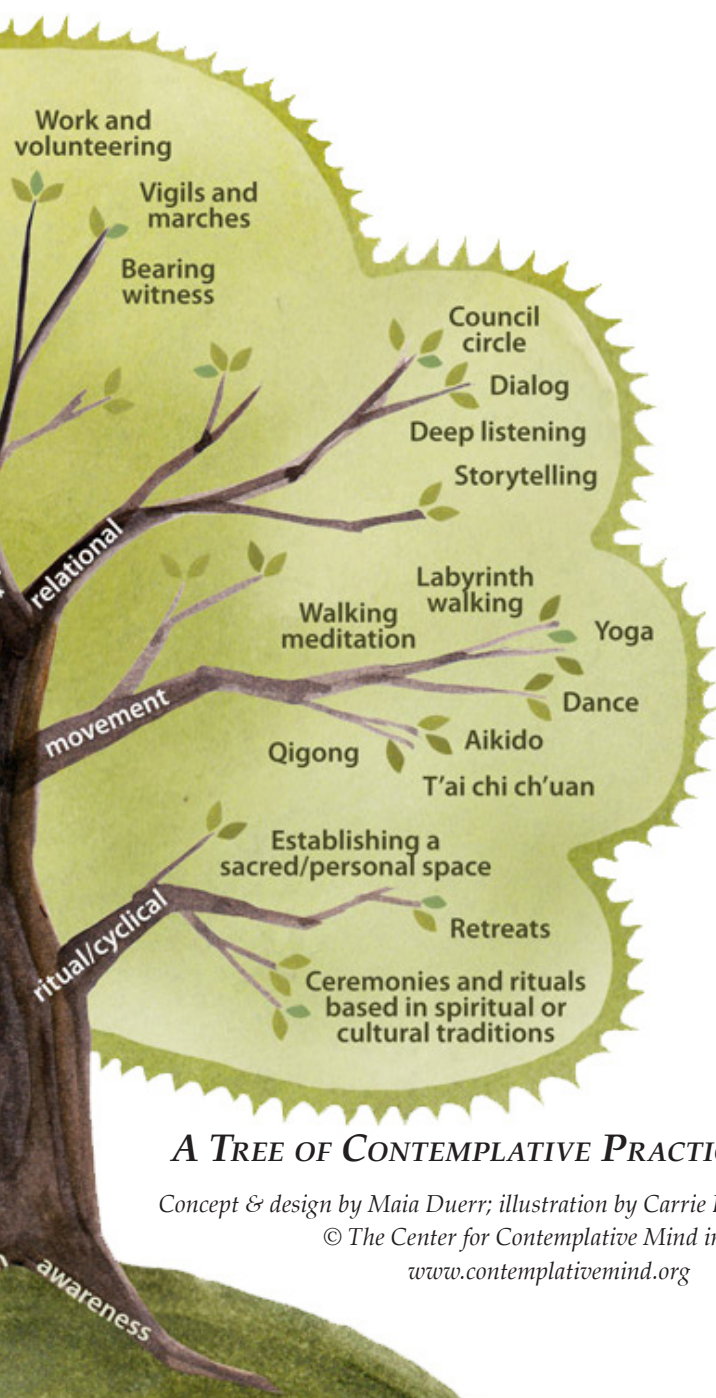
1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sit comfortably, eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence & action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts,* return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

* thoughts include body sensations, feeling, images, and reflections



for Soul Tending

Now is the time to give our individual selves permission to do it our way and know that there is no right or wrong way to have personal devotions. — Rev. Dr. Lisa Johnson



A TREE OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES

Concept & design by Maia Duerr; illustration by Carrie Bergman
© The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
www.contemplativemind.org

REVIVING OURSELVES

Permission Granted!

Our developmental stages have a strange way of impacting our adult lives. We have this strange proclivity to base many of our adult decisions on the experiences we had as we were being shaped and formed in childhood. In many instances, the messages we heard, believed and lived into have not been things that pushed us into our purpose nor caused us to feel like we could really achieve in places that are outside of those said experiences. When we begin to grow spiritually, we sometimes put a limit on our personal expectations because we are trying to measure up or get it right based on what we heard early in life. We are playing messages of old and they have crippled us in our ability to be open and grow spiritually.

Today, I invite you to give yourself permission to start where you are. I invite you to not compare your spiritual journey to anyone else's. I invite you to a place where you accept that we are all heading in the same direction; even as we are on what I will call, a collective individual journey. We are all being invited into a deeper relationship with the Lord; which means we are all in this together. Now is the time to give our individual selves permission to do it our way and know that there is no right or wrong way to have personal devotions.

It may be a 5 minute devotional and prayer for you, while your sister or brother may be doing 30-60 minutes in devotions and prayer. We do not gain anything by attempting to measure our spiritual walk according to how someone else is walking. Slow down! Breathe! Breathe again! Ask the Lord to show you where to start and give yourself permission to take your first step by reading a scripture, or saying "Lord Help", or doing some deep breathing and being still. Whatever road you take, know that you are okay and that your spiritual muscles will be strengthened the more you use them. Permission granted! You are on the right path, because it is yours!

*Rev. Dr. Lisa Johnson
Interim Co-Pastoral Director*

Life interrupted? Yes, but life here at Richmond Hill does go on...



Check your inbox for weekly email Updates



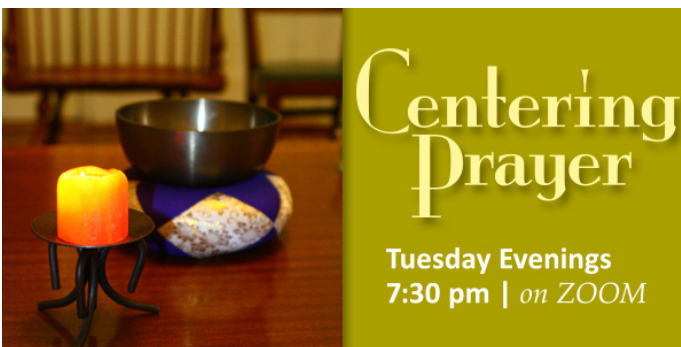
Join us on Facebook nightly at 9 pm for A Song & A Prayer



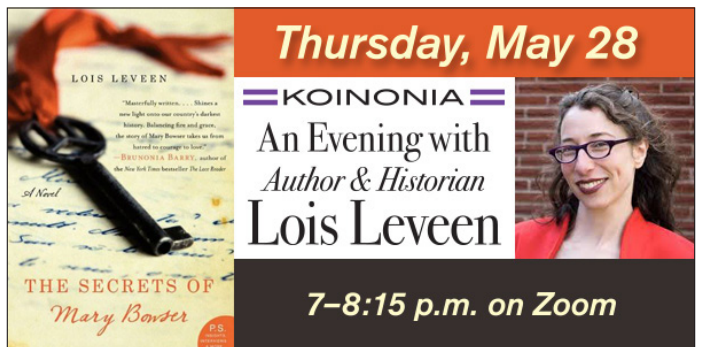
Thanks to Zoom, new programs are being offered



Micah organized a Zoom gathering with Superintendent Jason Kamras



Regular groups are continuing to gather virtually



The important work around Race & Justice continues



Micah volunteers made over 1,000 bookmarks for RPS students



A veggie garden emerges... thanks Ben, Beth, Allison & CHAT folks

RUAH XIX

SCHOOL OF SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

New Class to begin Fall 2020 for Clergy & Church Professionals

Richmond Hill will begin a new weekday session of the RUAH School of Spiritual Guidance in Fall 2020.

This weekday design is particularly intended to make the program available to clergy and other church professionals for whom Sunday classes are impossible.

The two-year program is composed of two 48-hour retreats and eight 24-hour retreats for each of two years. The 24-hour retreats are held on the third Thursday evening and Friday each month; the 48-hour retreats extend from Wednesday supper through Friday.

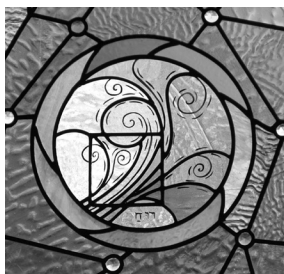
The program consists of monthly retreats in the context of the rhythm of life of the Richmond Hill Community. Prayer and faith sharing are a part of the discipline of all participants. One book is assigned each month on the upcoming topic.

Acceptance in RUAH XIX is primarily limited to clergy and church professionals. If you are interested in this program, please inquire immediately to DeBorah Cannady, Registrar of the RUAH School at Richmond Hill.

The deadline for applications is June 21st.

For more information or to apply, please contact DeBorah Cannady, Registrar of the RUAH School of Spiritual Guidance at Richmond Hill (804) 783-7903 or email: dcannady@richmondhillva.org

Some scholarship assistance is available.



Making an Offering

Richmond Hill has now been closed to outside visitors since the middle of March. As a non-resident, I find myself missing the grounding pleasure of a daily walk in the garden, the inspiration of the view from the cupola, the joys of everyday interactions with this beloved community.

Yet, amidst the sadness of being apart, what I feel most is gratitude. At a time when we all need a spiritual anchor, the Richmond Hill mission of seeking God's healing in our metropolitan city is as vital as ever.

I feel gratitude for ways to stay connected at a time when we cannot physically be together— whether Zooming with a RUAH class, streaming our 9pm evening song and prayer before bed, or recreating a rhythm of prayer here in our homes. I am grateful for the residents who keep the physical place running, praying three times a day, and keep us all connected.

We must be honest: these months are tough. We don't know what Richmond Hill is like when we cannot safely host guests. We are all still figuring out the best ways to live into our mission in a time of global pandemic. We do know that it continues to cost money to make this place run. We do know we will be missing a key source of revenue in an uncertain economy. We do know that you, our community, are essential to our mission.

Now is a key time for all of us to deepen our relationship with Richmond Hill. Regular, monthly, offerings are not only a spiritual practice, but also help build a firm financial foundation for us all to stand on, together.

To deepen my own relationship with Richmond Hill when I can't be there in person, I just became a monthly donor. Richmondhillva.org/give makes it easy.

Will you join me?

*Lindsey Franklin
Associate Pastor for Development*

VIRTUAL WORSHIP & PRAYER

SONG & A PRAYER

Every night at 9:00 p.m. — look online on Facebook

COMMUNITY WORSHIP

Every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. — look online on Facebook

PRAYING WITH THE SONGS OF TAIZÉ

First Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. — look online on Facebook

CIRCLES: THE WAY OF COUNCIL

Men's Circle: 2nd Thursdays at 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. — Zoom

CENTERING PRAYER

*Every Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. — Please call (703) 975-4283
or e-mail bbsmi@aol.com*



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Spring 2020



Metro Richmond at Prayer

In May: *Pray for the Criminal Justice System
in Metropolitan Richmond.*

...and in June: *Pray for the Churches & Religious
Institutions of 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 residents; for the establishment of God's order in our community.

MONDAYS: Our residents 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 residents 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 residents.

THURSDAYS: Our residents 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 residents 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 residents 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 residents 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

