



## TENDING THE SPIRIT

### Bringing Shalom to the City

The poem “Desert Places” by Robert Frost first spoke to me decades ago, as a lonely teenager. It continues to do so today.

We all have our desert places — loneliness, fear, regret for wrongs we have done and memories of wrongs done to us, mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

The list is long. How can we not only cope but overcome?

Only recently have I become aware of how often the desert, or the wilderness, is referenced in a positive light in the Bible. Moses, Elijah, David, John the Baptist and Jesus, among others, each confronted personal challenges in desert places and emerged stronger for the experience.

I also have come to realize that scriptural references to desert places are not always literal — blazing sun and endless sand — but are often metaphorical. They are places of deep solitude where one can hear the whispers of God.

So, ironically, the frightening “desert places” of Frost’s poem — which we confront as imperfect human beings — often can be overcome when we seek out the quiet “desert places” where God’s voice can be heard. But where can one find divinely inspired quiet and solitude in the midst of a bustling city and the demands of everyday life?

One such place is Richmond Hill.

Richmond Hill is an ecumenical retreat center on Church Hill, less than a mile from the Capitol. Its mission is “to seek God’s healing of metropolitan Richmond through prayer, hospitality, racial reconciliation and spiritual development.”

It is a place where one can hear God’s voice, experience his healing, and follow his direction.

Richmond Hill’s remarkable history began 150 years ago [last] month, as six nuns arrived from Baltimore to start a monastery and school. Richmond in 1866 was a devastated city, its economy literally in ashes and its spirit figuratively so.

The nuns moved into a house on the highest point in the city, on a bluff overlooking the Shockoe Valley. And they began to pray. Every day, the nuns at Monte Maria prayed for the peace of the city and the welfare of its residents. Every day for 120 years.

Their prayers are best described by the Hebrew word shalom, which encompasses well-being, tranquility, prosperity and security. The prophet Jeremiah called upon the faithful to “seek the shalom of the city,” an exhortation the nuns took seriously.

In 1986, the nuns’ order began the process of selling Monte Maria, which by then covered an entire city block, to a nonprofit entity created by members of 15 diverse local churches.

## DESERT PLACES

*They cannot scare me  
with their empty spaces  
Between stars — on stars  
where no human race is.  
I have it in me so much  
nearer home  
To scare myself with my  
own desert places.*

— Robert Frost

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## TENDING THE SPIRIT

Richmond Hill was born. And the prayers for shalom continued, along with many good works.

It is delightfully ironic to refer to Richmond Hill as a “desert place,” for it is a thriving spiritual community with a lush and beautiful garden. Yet, it is also a place of quiet and solitude where one can hear God’s whispers.

A more apt description may be what the Celts called a “thin place” — where the distance between heaven and earth, between God and man, is small.

I came to this realization during a day retreat recently as I sat on a bench in the garden, praying, reading and writing. I was facing southward, high above the city.

Around me, all was perfectly peaceful and still. If there was an actual Garden of Eden, it must have felt like that. In the distance, I could barely see and hear the traffic snaking along Interstate 95.

Also in the distance was the majestic James River, where slave ships once docked. To my right on the next hill was Thomas Jefferson’s magnificent Capitol. The valley between the two hills was the site of Lumpkin’s Jail, the notorious slave market.

Behind me was St. John’s Episcopal Church, where Patrick Henry eloquently called for liberty. Yet just a few blocks past the church are mean streets where death often accompanies drug deals.

Richmond’s history is complicated, and our present is often troubled. But as long as Richmond Hill exists, as long as faithful women and men retreat there to pray for the shalom of the city and depart strengthened to work for its healing, there is hope for our future.

William C. Mims

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## REVIVE RICHMOND

## Widening the Circle

Each new season brings opportunity for change and growth. We celebrated that recently remembering the faithfulness of the Sisters of the Visitation of Monte Maria who began their work and prayer here on Richmond Hill 150 years ago. Drawing on their example and strength, ministry continues on this fall with the start up of annual programs and offerings of spiritual development, racial dialogue, support for children and youth, and outreach.

It’s our practice at Richmond Hill to precede the new season with a community retreat involving residents, staff, and Council. It was a time for us to strengthen relationships, reconnect with our mission, and prepare for the many guests who will come to be renewed, inspired and equipped.

Our theme was Widening the Circle, inspired by the Rilke poem, “I live my life in widening circles....” found in his classic *Book of Hours*. We looked at the impact of our work here upon individual lives, our immediate community, and the metropolitan area as a whole. This work, of course, reaches even farther than that.

That truth was brought home recently in the preceding article that appeared in the Faith and Values section of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, written by Virginia Supreme Court Justice William C. Mims. Reproduced here with Bill’s permission, the article is another reminder that our influence stretches far and wide, those who have gone before paving the way for a faith-filled future.

Rev. Joel Blunk  
Co-Pastoral Director

*I live my life in widening circles  
That reach out across the world.  
I may not ever complete the last one,  
But I give myself to it.*

*I circle around God, that primordial tower.  
I have been circling for thousands of years,  
And I still don’t know: am I a falcon,  
A storm, or a great song?*

Rainer Maria Rilke  
*Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*

**Pray for Schools and Educational Institutions of Metropolitan Richmond.**

*Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children. (Deut 4:9)*

September 2016

**September 4, 2016.** We pray for schools and educational institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For all Superintendents, School Boards, School Administrators, PTAs, teachers, students, and staff.

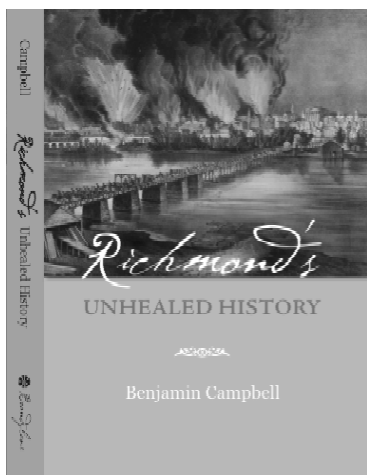
**September 11, 2016.** We pray for schools and educational institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For all public schools; for students, teachers and support personnel, including cafeteria workers, building and grounds staff, and school bus drivers; for all private and religious schools, pre-schools and daycare centers, and for children in home schools.

**September 18, 2016.** We pray for schools and educational institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For all universities, colleges, seminaries, trade, technical, graduate, and professional schools; for the students, faculty, and staff of these institutions.

**September 25, 2016.** We pray for schools and educational institutions of Metropolitan Richmond: For healthy relationships between parents, teachers, and students; for cooperation between Superintendents and Administrators of public and private schools throughout this metropolitan city.

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.

Order by telephone (783-7903) or on the web richmondhillva.org

Your order from the Richmond Hill Bookstore supports Richmond Hill.

## Arrivals and departures

A warm welcome to **Betty Jane Hagan** of First Baptist Church as she joins the Urban Service Corps Class of 2016-17. As part of her duties, Betty Jane will be working with Bon Secours in the East End this year. **Josie Carver**, also of First Baptist Church, has come onboard to assist with hospitality in the kitchen while she completes her Masters work at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond. **Brian Lamm** headed off to Thailand this summer, and **Tony Martin** and **Linda Anderson** have transitioned out of the residential community as well, and into what comes next. We are grateful for their good service, and wish them all blessings and peace.

We welcome **Keesha Sims** as our new Administrator, as we bid our goodbyes to **Charles Williams**, who served faithfully as the Administrator during the search for Keesha. Godspeed and blessings as you go, Charles!

## ARMSTRONG LEADERSHIP PROGRAM College Shower Initiative

The Armstrong Leadership Program College Shower Initiative completed its 5th year of honoring Armstrong High School graduates who are attending a residential college or university. The concept is an opportunity to shower a student with dorm room essentials while building supportive relationships with members from the greater Richmond community. Students received encouragement and established new relationships, which will help tremendously with their transition process.

The students received assistance with the following items: Laptop computers, refrigerators, microwaves, bedding, cleaning supplies, gift cards, and school supplies, to name a few. Additionally, for the second consecutive year, a well-deserving student has received a \$4,000.00 scholarship from St. Paul's Episcopal Church to assist with tuition and fees. Although all of the students were excited and appreciative of the items they received, they were equally overwhelmed by the expressions of love as recognition for their academic excellence, leadership and positive attitude. The shower not only helped students and their families with the initial financial burden of college, but also eased much of the anxiety that comes with transition into college life.

"We created a bond that will last longer than the college shower ever will," quoted one recipient.

"It's the will of God that each student prospers and if God opens the door for you to receive a college education, he is more than able to see you through." This has been our message to each graduate. We are grateful for all of the hosts this year in helping to make the DREAM of attending college a REALITY! We especially thank Dr. Mary Stone for volunteering and coordinating these efforts. This collaboration was made possible with the support of UVA College Advising Corps, RVA Future Center, and Communities In Schools / Armstrong.

**2016 HOSTS:** Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Faith Community Baptist Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bethany Place Baptist Church, St. John's Episcopal Church, Friends of Richmond Hill, Angelyn Scott and Friends, The Stones, United Parcel Service, Hunton and Williams LLC. St. Bridgets Church and State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

— 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

# 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 Mon. 4 p.m.– Sat. 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 \$65 per 24 hrs. / Guided \$90 per 24 hrs.  
Contact Deborah Cannady, 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](http://www.GraceMoves.com)

Contact DeBorah Cannady at Richmond Hill to register 804-783-7903 or [retreats@richmondhillva.org](mailto: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](mailto:retreats@richmondhillva.org)  
Please register in advance. Space is limited.

## GROUPS

### 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](mailto: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.

## Koinonia School of Race & Justice Fall Lecture Series begins

**Theology of Race** | Rev. Dr. John Kinney  
September 26, Monday, 7:30 pm

**[G]RACE** Finding  
Grace  
in Race

*A public lecture series designed to encourage open and honest dialogue around issues of race and justice.*

*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](mailto:retreats@richmondhillva.org)*

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, Beaverdam, 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**  
Theology of Race

**Monday, October 24**  
Race & Richmond's History

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

COMING UP THIS OCTOBER

POVERTY • HOUSING • EDUCATION • TRANSPORTATION

# The Prophet Speaks

FOR THE SOUL OF THE CITY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2016

## 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*

*More details, and to register: [www.richmondhillva.org](http://www.richmondhillva.org)*

## WORSHIP SERVICES

### 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.

### EUCCHARIST 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.

## 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. Experience the day by doing any of the listed activities using your own materials that you bring or using the materials we have on hand:

- You can bring a project you are working on now.
- You can start a new project (example: drawing, collage, watercolor).
- You can create/work on your Personal Rule or Rhythm of Life.

For this project you may want to ask yourself questions like: Am I spending the time I would like in prayer? Am I mindful of God during my busy day? Do I need direction to be more mindful of my spiritual values and practices? Do I need something new and more personal for my spiritual life and journey?

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.

Take a break from the rush and hurry of your busy day and join us in a creative retreat in the inspiring setting of Richmond Hill. Step into the spiritual rhythm of prayer and quiet here and enjoy personal time with your creative self. Our art space provides the perfect place for you to connect with your inner spirit while using your creativity. We look forward to having you with us!

**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](mailto:retreats@richmondhillva.org)

1866 – 2016:

*Sisters of the Visitation of Mary at Monte Maria and Richmond Hill*

## Honoring 150 years of prayer, study and work for the city

In August of 1866, seven Visitation Sisters from Baltimore, Maryland came to Richmond, Virginia at the request of Bishop John McGill to pray for the diocese (Catholic Diocese of Richmond, VA) and its priests. The Sisters opened an academy for girls to support themselves.



Monte Maria Academy

In 1894, Mrs. Thomas Ryan donated funds to build the Chapel, which is still in active use today. In 1922, Mother Mary Magdalene of Monte Maria received an inheritance which afforded the building of the dormitory, which also remains in active use today.

However, in 1927 the community voted unanimously to close Monte Maria Academy in order to live a more contemplative life. Baking altar breads then became their main source of income. In 1956, the addition of two letterpresses became an additional source of livelihood. The Sisters established a reputation for fine quality printing of holy cards and pamphlets.



For more than 120 years the Monastery was on Richmond's Church Hill. A book published in 1966 to commemorate the 100th anniversary described it as the "Sentinel on the Hill." Even after the Sisters relocated their community in 1987 to another little hill in Rockville, VA (35 miles from the original Monte Maria Academy of Richmond), it has not ceased to be that sentinel.

Through their contemplative life, lived in a community of charity, the Sisters continue their "watching and waiting for the Lord." Their silent testimony is a beautiful, specific way of extending the Kingdom of God, and of sharing in the evangelization of the world.



*Monte Maria, the Monastery of the Visitation of Holy Mary, relocated to Rockville, Virginia, in 1987*

## Questioning the quest

My seeking God sometimes distracts me from God. That is the answer which came to me, as my epiphanies often do, in the wee hours on this Labor Day Monday morning.

The answer was to a question on a handout called "Intentional Examen," which was distributed to the intentional spirituality group which meets at St. James's Episcopal Church on the first Sunday of the month. We began meeting regularly as an outgrowth from a forum series offered last fall on monastic spirituality — there is a strong interest in discovering what value those ancient practices might still hold today.

Question no.5 on the Intentional Examen form read: "Where in your life are you distracted from God? What observations can you make about why or what leads to your distraction?"

There were four other questions on the form designed to bring into focus just how well we might be succeeding in our practice of living out an intentional spiritual life.

There are many ways to express one's intentions of drawing closer to God. There's prayer, worship, and contemplation. And within these broad categories there are many subdivisions to be found. The pathways to God run inward and outward, private and corporate.

Richard Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline* is a master guidebook covering a range of practices to maintain a spiritually healthy heart. Inward disciplines such as prayer, meditation, fasting and study work along side of the outward disciplines: simplicity, service, solitude and submission. And don't forget the corporate practices — confession, worship, spiritual guidance and celebration.

How can one ever hope to keep all this straight? Ah, that's where a Rule of Life fits in. Not in the restrictive sense of "these are the rules and you better not break them," but, rather in the spirit of having guideposts available to mark one's path.

The Rule of Life here at Richmond Hill is based on a simplified Benedictine Rule, and it forms a core around which the life of this community is organized. It also serves to provide me with a base chart which helps me in navigating my spiritual journey.

Somewhere along the way of wandering down the ancient paths, I find myself distracted by the business of busy-ness — keeping track of the directions — so much so that I can forget where I was directed. And by Whom. That's a big distraction. And a crying shame.

*Richard Rumble  
Communications Director*



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September 2016



Metro Richmond at Prayer

In September:

Pray for Schools and Educational Institutions of 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.

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.



Show your support with a Metro Richmond at Prayer bumper sticker Order online:

www.metroprayrva.org or call (804)783-7903.