

UPDATE



For the spirit of the city

2209 EAST GRACE STREET, RICHMOND, VA 23223

DECEMBER 2017

TENDING THE SPIRIT

Imitating Mary

Each Evening Prayer at Richmond Hill we sing or say the Canticle of Mary. It's tradition, and a fitting one for a place once known as Monte Maria or Mary's Hill. While men garner much of the attention in the Judeo-Christian story, there are a number of women, too, who stand out. Mary is one of them. Her significance is worth considering again this Advent.

Mary is considered by many to be the first disciple. She took God's word to heart regarding Jesus, doing what all disciples do, trusting and believing. She knew of the incarnation nine months before the rest of us! Willingly, she accepted the invitation to let it be so.

Mary is there throughout Jesus' life, not just in the beginning. She nurtures, supports, affirms and stands by Jesus to the bitter end and beyond. Mary is there in the upper room at Pentecost when the gift of the Holy Spirit is given (Acts 1:14) offering encouragement to those who once denied and abandoned Jesus. She appears as matriarch to the cause, affirming the gift of the indwelling Spirit.

She serves as an archetype for us, too, modeling true discipleship and setting an example of what true faith looks like. Her selection as the mother of God is anything but expected, yet in her we see that God cares for all of us.

She was an unlikely choice. In the first place, being a woman made her a second-class citizen. Her age, too, would seem a problem, too young to be taken seriously. And the fact that she was from Nazareth – the wrong side of the tracks – and not from Jerusalem or Caesarea, was a third strike against her. Yet, God chose her just the same. She did nothing wrong, but there is no indication that she did anything right either. What did matter is that God reached out to her. God showed her favor. And she responded, becoming a vessel of grace for the rest of the world, God's love moving through her.

We are asked to do the same, to be receptive to God's

love. The favor of God's love is not based on any of us being better or more important than anyone else. To the contrary. As a friend of mine likes to say, "God loves us not because we are good, but because God is!" Acceptance of God's love enables us to see that others, too, are loved the same.

Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas says that we are not converted by ideas, but "by the face of the other." For that to happen we have to be open and ready, innocent and vulnerable like Mary. We have to be willing to see and be seen.

Last January, Rev. Alvin Herring, Director of Racial Equity and Community Engagement with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, spoke in our chapel for the National Day of Racial Healing. He introduced us to a simple South African Zulu greeting: "I see you," which is met with the response, "Then, I am here!" An encounter like that requires reciprocal presence. I have to be here to know you are here and vice versa. We see something similar fulfilled in Mary. The reciprocal encounter was authenticated in her bold response, "Then let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

*Mary's song
imagines a reversal of
trends, a turning of
the tables on privilege
and power.*

Where others, ourselves included, often pull the "I'm not worthy," clause, Mary does no such thing. She ponders what's been asked in her heart and then simply says yes. Can we do the same? Are we willing to let God show up in our lives? Are we willing to be handmaids and instruments of the Lord ourselves?

We can be God-bearers too. God wants to be a part of our lives, but doesn't seem to come uninvited or unwelcomed. Some of the onus falls on us. We have to be willing, like Mary. When we are, we join the company of many who have gone before as willing participants in God's work in the world.

Other than yes, we hear very little from Mary until she shows up on the doorstep of her cousin Elizabeth. Then she breaks out in song, praising God's goodness and revealing what God has in store for the world. There is abundant hope in her words. In fact, so full of hope is she that when she sings out, her song proclaims God's promises as if they have already occurred. God

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TENDING THE SPIRIT

has “scattered the proud in their conceit, brought down the powerful from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty” (Luke 2:39-56).

Her words speak hope today, too, for a city where many remain marginalized according to income and the color of their skin; a city where food deserts persist, education is disparate, and public transportation remains woefully inadequate. Mary’s song imagines a reversal of trends, a turning of the tables on privilege and power. And she speaks for us! Like the prophets of old, one voice rings out for the many inviting us to sing God’s desire into being with her.

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, in her devotional book, *Women of God, Women of the People* (Chalice Press, St. Louis, MO. 1995), encourages us to rise to the occasion, mentioning three ways we can discover the strength of Mary in ourselves today. Like Mary, we are to denounce injustice and take a stand when we see people being mistreated. Like Mary, we are to act against cultural norms and practice a radical way of life consistent with the Gospel. Like Mary, we are to stay in the struggle and be persistent, generation upon generation.

People on this hill have been seeking to do those things for longer than any of us have been around, the Sisters of the Visitation of Monte Maria paving the way. For the past 30 years, we’ve been at it too, as Richmond Hill. We celebrate that this Advent season even as we await further healing and transformation in our metropolitan city. But like Mary, we don’t wait passively, we act together as God-bearers ready to embrace and embody God’s love for the sake of this city and people everywhere.

Rev. Joel Blunk
Co-Pastoral Director

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REVIVE RICHMOND

An Altar in the Midst

Just before the start of Richmond Hill’s 30th Anniversary Celebration last Thursday, I went to the chapel to pray. The platform before me was staged with several musical instruments to be used during the celebration. In the midst of the instruments stood the chalice-shaped altar. Moved by the central location of the altar, by its stark and stable presence among things so mobile and different than itself, and moved by the symbolism of its very existence, I sat holding before God my thoughts and feelings.

In that moment I was reminded of our Christian heritage concerning musical instruments. Over the centuries we as Christians have debated their use in worship. I was reminded as well that they can be either a source of inspiration or a source of distraction in worship. Such thoughts brought to mind that we are living in a culture where there is a recognizable melding of the sacred and the secular; perhaps because instruments of worship are always on the platform of our lives. Even though the players and their instruments may come and go, our devotion to God compels us to remember that the altar is always there -- front and center, waiting to be observed, to be revered and to be used as a source of holy inspiration. In Thursday’s moment of inspiration, I was reminded that Jesus, the Christ, is the ultimate altar in our midst. Sat in the world, some would say he was sat among sounding brass or clanging cymbals.

As with most moments of inspiration, I was prompted to act. In my heart I found a place of decision concerning 2017 Christmas worship at Richmond Hill, as well spiritual disciplines for the 2018 Lenten season. Drawing on the title of Barbara Brown Taylor’s book, and her suggestion that no physical act is too earthbound to become a path to the divine, the theme for 2017 Christmas at Richmond Hill will be *An Altar in the World*. As we embark on the New Year and move through Epiphany, we will prepare to explore Lent through the lens of Taylor’s book, contemplating what it means to be *Waking Up to God*.

In her book, Taylor reminds us that sacred encounters can be experienced through the basic encounters of walking, carrying water, being with other people, or praying. While holding in my heart before God chairs to be filled by people from all over metropolitan Richmond and a platform filled with musical instruments, with an altar in the midst, I experienced the truth of this understanding anew. Sacred also is the understanding that, “The world is full of altars, if we are willing to welcome the truth that comes to us in the flesh,” even when it comes among instruments of all kinds and ones that are so different than ourselves.

Rev. Janie M. Walker
Co-Pastoral Director

Pray for the Families of Metropolitan Richmond.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:3)

December 2017

December 3, 2017. We pray for the families of Metropolitan Richmond: For single-parent families, adoptive families, foster families, and for households that are communities of friends; for elderly persons living in their own homes, in retirement communities, and in nursing institutions.

December 10, 2017. We pray for the families of Metropolitan Richmond: For persons who are lonely or have no family; for persons who are estranged from their families; for persons who are grieving the loss of a loved one; and for all who need to feel the love of God.

December 17, 2017. We pray for the families of Metropolitan Richmond: For the care and protection of infants, children, and youth; and for the intimate knowledge that each one is a beloved child of God.

December 24, 2017. We pray for the families of Metropolitan Richmond: For an end to child abuse; for healthy relationships between children and their caregivers; for families going through divorce; and for all in the midst of life transitions.

December 31, 2017. We pray for the families of Metropolitan Richmond: For peace, reconciliation, forgiveness and accord among family members, whatever the distance, and however old the hurt or grievance.

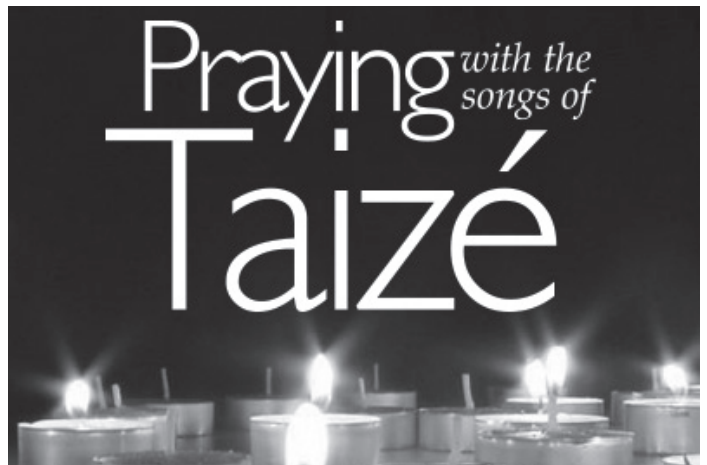


*Prayer Books, Beads, and Blessing Bands make wonderful Christmas Gifts...
Now on sale in the Richmond Hill Bookstore*



Community Worship Service Moves to Tuesdays in 2018

Beginning in January 2018, our weekly Community Worship Service will move from Monday to Tuesday evenings. This change will provide our residents with a few additional hours of Sabbath rest and needed time together as “a family.” **The shift will happen on Tuesday, January 2.** The service will continue to be held in the chapel at the same time as before, 5:30 PM, and be followed by a community meal in our refectory. We hope the change will not be an inconvenience and that you will plan to join us then as now, as we continue to work and pray for the healing of metropolitan Richmond.



“Praying With The Songs of Taizé” is moving to First Tuesdays in 2018

Beginning in January, our monthly Taizé service will move to the first Tuesday evening of each month. **Our first time praying the songs of Taizé in the new year will occur on Tuesday night, January 2, at 7:30 PM.** We hope to see you there and that you will also help us spread the word.

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 \$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 FOR 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, 4:45 - 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 Mary Lewis at 804-783-7903 to register.*

Enjoy a day in the studio...



Facilitator: Brenda Giannini opens us to the sacred dimensions of our lives through the gifts of the visual arts. Suggested donation: \$30.00 (includes lunch) To register, please contact Mary Lewis, at (804) 783-7903 or by email: retreats@richmondhillva.org

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



Join the Richmond Hill community for a weekend retreat patterned after Taizé, “that little springtime” in the Southern French Alps. Our weekend together will consist of small group formation, conscious work in the community, a chance to learn about both the mission of Taizé and Richmond Hill, and, of course, time to pray the songs of Taizé. Each of our regular prayer times will be done in Taizé fashion incorporating the songs of Taizé, silence, and our daily prayers for metropolitan Richmond.

The weekend will be lead by Co-Pastoral Director, Rev. Joel Blunk, who has spent two weeks in the Taizé community, and musician Jim Bennett, who leads the Richmond Hill monthly service, *Praying With The Songs of Taizé*.

- Pray the songs of Taizé
- Experience community at Richmond Hill
- Spend time in small group discussion
- Learn about both the Taizé and Richmond Hill communities
- Share delicious common meals
- Be renewed for faithful living out in the world
- Seek the healing of metropolitan Richmond through prayer, hospitality, racial reconciliation and spiritual development

Register on-line at richmondhillva.org or call Richmond Hill at (804) 783-7903 ext.10

Suggested donation: \$180. Space limited to 30

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 Tuesday beginning in 2018

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

Jim Bennett, Leader

7:30 p.m. first Tuesday

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 mind. 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 instruments.

SOAKING PRAYER SERVICE

DeBorah Cannady, Leader

1st Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. and 3rd Thursdays 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

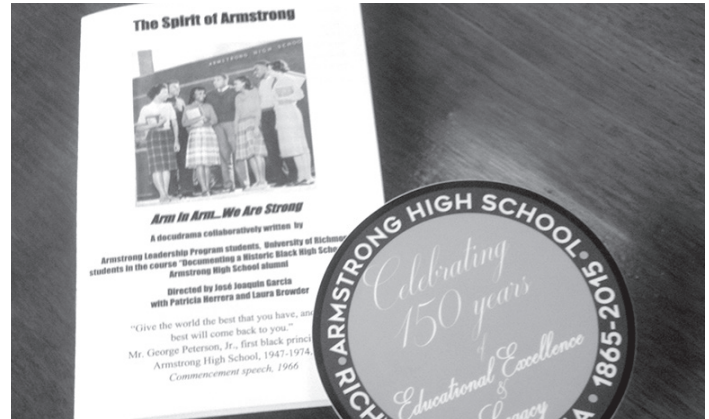
5th Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

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.

For those who might find it helpful, 2-hour preparation sessions will be facilitated by Rev. Parker. For more information, call DeBorah Cannady at 783-7903.

COMMUNITY NEWS



The Spirit of Armstrong.

On Monday evening, December 4, 2017, students from the **Armstrong Leadership Program** and the University of Richmond debuted their collaboratively written docudrama "The Spirit of Armstrong" to an enthusiastic audience at Armstrong High School. Their effort was to share the rich and complex history of Richmond's oldest (and only surviving) black high school, and to show its current challenges in the context of the educational policy debates that are now taking place across this city, as well as the nation.

"We want people to stand with us to make Armstrong a better place... we want the community to know what Armstrong stands for and why it needs to continue to stand for generations to come," stated the ALP students.

We thank you for your continued support of the Armstrong Leadership Program and facilitating us with the means to provide our students with the opportunities they deserve. *Learn more about Armstrong Leadership Program through Yvette Rajput at 804-783-7903, ext. 13, or, alp@richmondhillva.org Like Us on Facebook @ Armstrong-Leadership*



The Recovery Eucharist is a service devoted to healing and personal transformation found within 12-step spirituality and embodied in the Eucharist. A special invitation is extended to those recovering from any addiction and to those who desire to support people in recovery.

Each 4th Tuesdays at 7:30 pm in Chapel.

Leader: Rev. Herbert Jones

NOVEMBER 30, 2017



Photography: Jabriel Hasan

Celebrating 30 years of praying and working for the healing transformation of metropolitan Richmond!

It was truly a spirited evening of Song & Celebration. In addition to Jim Bennett and the Rev. Joel Blunk, the guest musicians included Oak Grove Elementary School (under the direction of Tevin Ware), St. Peter's choir (under the direction of Rose Carter), Kevin Davis, Rev. Drew Willson, Cora Armstrong, and Tony Martin of Deep Passion Ministries. Stories were told, prayers prayed, and the singing was over the top!

It was a time to share and honor stories of those who helped bring this special place into being. What follows here is the text of a reflection shared that evening by Cindy Paris, a former member of Council and long-time friend of Richmond Hill.

Here is Cindy's story:

It started with a dream.

I worked (still work) at the Times-Dispatch, and traveled downtown from the West End and back every day, rarely going farther east than 10th Street. I'd only been up to Church Hill a couple of times in my life. But one night I dreamed that my friend Mary Louise McCullough and I were in a red pickup truck, heading west, back downtown from Church Hill. In my dream there was a bridge along Broad Street, crossing the dip from around

19th St. to 9th or 10th – but the bridge was out, and a policeman stopped us before we went over the edge.

Sorry, he said, y'all are gonna be stuck up here for a while.

Strange, but I didn't think much of it until later.

Mary Louise worked at the paper, too, and was a resident at Richmond Hill. She and Paula Parker had been to Christian Healing Ministries in Jacksonville, Fla. – and were so inspired that they had arranged for two of the women from Francis and Judith MacNutt's ministry to come to Richmond Hill for a 48-hour Healing Prayer retreat. It would be in January 1996; could I come too?

Yes! I'd never been to Richmond Hill, and was excited to attend my first retreat there. The retreat itself was awesome, challenging, at times upsetting. In the old chapel I experienced a profound healing of a memory that had haunted me for 20 years. But the real surprise – and the grace – of the weekend was the storm: It snowed, and snowed, and snowed. Traffic couldn't move, businesses couldn't open, and when the retreat was supposed to end, it didn't. We were gonna be stuck up here for a while.

I stayed at Richmond Hill into the next week, walking down, then up Broad Street to work, taking a bus back when the streets were cleared. I think we dug my car out Tuesday or Wednesday.

I'm not sure when that dream came back to me, but I remembered the hand that had stopped me before I went over the edge, and led me to a place of healing.

— Cindy Paris (21 years later)

For the spirit of the city



**YES! THERE WILL BE
COMMUNITY WORSHIP
5:30 PM ON CHRISTMAS
MONDAY, DECEMBER 25**

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December 2017



**Metro
Richmond at
Prayer**

In December:

**Pray for the Families 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 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: eepurl.com/cNLIbj

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