“Just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”

– Matthew 20: 28

Richmond Hill Urban Service Corps

Richmond Hill has developed the Urban Service Corps to provide young adults, ages 18-35, an opportunity to serve after the example of Christ and participate in God’s healing in the metropolitan City of Richmond.

This program provides young women and men an opportunity to engage in service within metropolitan Richmond, in initiatives in Richmond Public Schools, mobilizing churches, volunteering in local agencies and non-profits to foster overall improvement in our community.

The Corps also provides a rare opportunity to participate in a residential, ecumenical Christian Community and retreat center housed in an historic monastery in the heart of the City. Through this program, Urban Service Corps participants gain an understanding of how the Holy Spirit engages both the people and the social structures of a city, as well as how the life of a Christian community can provide a powerful witness for the possibilities of reconciliation and healing in a metropolitan area.

The Richmond Hill Urban Service Corps is a one to two-year commitment that begins each August. Typically, we will have two to four Service Corps interns in the Community each year.

To apply to the Corps, follow these five steps:

1. Fill out the application and turn it in to Richmond Hill by May 15.
2. This is followed by a phone or in-person interview with the applicant.
3. Based on application and phone call, selected applicants will be invited to a 48-hour retreat at Richmond Hill to have an opportunity to spend time with the Community.
4. The Residential Community then gathers to discuss the application, reflection questions, and the visit.
5. Candidates will be contacted to be invited into the program.

There are seven key areas in the design of the Fellowship:

- Prayer
- Service
- Spiritual Development
- Community Formation
- Simplicity of Life
- Racial Reconciliation
- Vocational Discernment

These areas are described in further detail on the following page.
Prayer

You will pray for the city three times a day as part of the regular Richmond Hill prayer cycle. You also will have the opportunity to participate in Centering Prayer, Healing Prayer, a monthly Taizé prayer service, and Lectio Divina. There is also space for private devotions.

Service

You will engage with the life of metropolitan Richmond for 20-25 hours a week either through a ministry of Richmond Hill or by way of a partnering non-profit, meet with civic leaders, become aware of the history and divisions that shape the city, and be part of the Spirit’s movement towards the city’s healing and future.

Spiritual Development

You will live in a Christian community, participate in community weekly bible study, and take advantage of opportunities for spiritual direction. Access to an urban retreat center with beautiful gardens and spaces for solitude and personal reflection will be yours.

Community Formation

You will be invited to live, pray, and eat with an intentional community of committed seekers and sojourners of the Christian faith. You will get to share in the common work of hospitality offered to retreat guests and to care for the maintenance and cleaning of the center.

Simplicity of Life

You will live into a pattern of Christ-like downward mobility in contrast to our society’s and popular culture’s upward mobility. You will receive a modest stipend of $6000, have health insurance, a comfortable living space, and all meals provided, allowing you to exercise ministry out of a simple place of stability.

Racial Reconciliation

You will live in a racially diverse community, learn to engage with the history of race in Richmond, and have opportunities to build relationships across racial lines contributing to the healing of the city’s racial and economic divides.

Vocational Discernment

You will participate in the Vocaré School for Vocation. In Vocaré you will learn tools to discern your vocation in God’s world and envision your place in the whole of the city.
What is it like to live in a Christian community like Richmond Hill?

Here is an Introduction to Living at Richmond Hill according to three key principles of our Rule of Life (See Rule of Richmond Hill on following pages):

Hospitality

Cohosting — Providing hospitality to the wide variety of people who come to the retreat center, especially on weekends, is one of the privileges of living at Richmond Hill. It is an opportunity to welcome guests and invite them into the life of the Community.

The Basics of Cohosting:

• Sign up to cohost for two weekends a month as part of a cohosting team
• Greet people at the door, check them in and register their attendance
• Help lead community prayers
• Take turns staffing the front desk
• Assist with meal set-up and clean-up
• Be present for dish duty at meals throughout weekend
• Provide evening snack for guests
• Assist with shutting down the building at night

Dishes — Cleaning up after meals is one of the main times of bonding for people who live and work at Richmond Hill. It is a team effort and provides a true opportunity to serve.

The Basics of Dishes:

• Sign up to do dishes twice a week at dinner: washing dishes, cleaning flatware, sweeping floors, wiping tables.
• Dishes at other meal times are done collaboratively, with each person living or working at Richmond Hill taking responsibility for helping and keeping the kitchen clean.

Meals — We serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner regularly at Richmond Hill, especially on the weekends. The dining room, which we call a refectory, is one of the main places that we have the opportunity to provide hospitality to guests.

The Basics of Meals:

• Try to sit with people you have never met before at each meal
• Enjoy the conversation before getting up to leave or do dishes
• If there is no group in house, then meals are informal, prepared individually - people generally still gather after prayer times for these meals
• Attend dinner during the week in order to be with the community and provide hospitality to guests
Prayer

Prayers — The community gathers to pray for metropolitan Richmond 3 times a day, every day of the year. These prayers are the most important part of our life together. When the bell rings for prayer, we stop what we are doing and go to the chapel to pray.

The Basics of Prayers:

• Prayer times are daily at 7:00 am, 12:00 pm, and 6:00 pm with the exception of Monday evenings at 5:30 pm when we hold a Community Eucharist.
• Every member of the community stops to join in the prayers, if they are in the building.
• Eucharist or Communion Services are on Monday at 5:30 pm and Wednesday at 7:00 am.

Sabbath — Taking care of yourself while growing spiritually is essential to the Christian life. Working in the city and providing hospitality to guests can be demanding. Therefore, it is important that we care for ourselves through rest and leaving the walls of the monastery for excursions and activity.

The Basics of Sabbath:

• Our collective Sabbath is scheduled from 4:00 pm Sunday until 4:00 pm Mondays when the gates to the monastery are closed to the public.
• If not “cohosting,” weekends are free and one is encouraged to go out from Richmond Hill. Also the schedule during the week is flexible.
• Group Centering Prayer opportunities are available for 20 minutes in silence at 4:45 pm and 7:30 pm on Tuesdays.
• Spiritual Direction, for personal guidance in prayer and discernment, and Healing Prayer of various kinds are available to Urban Service Corps participants to enable growth and spiritual development.
• There is a monthly Taizé service with simple songs and silence by candlelight the first Monday of the month which Service Corps participants are welcome to attend.

Community

Rule of Life — The Rule of Life at Richmond Hill consists of traditional principles and sacred practices that each person in the community commits to as part of our life together. Our Rule is not meant to set limits in the way we usually think about “rules” in our present time and culture. Rather it is meant to be a guide rail that keeps us on track and helps us find our way together as we seek to be faithful followers along the way of Christ.

The Basics of any Rule of Life:

• A Rule of Life has been a part of how Christian communities organize themselves since the earliest communities formed in present day Egypt and Syria in the fourth century.
• There are twelve aspects to the Rule of Richmond Hill. They are: Conversion of Life, Obedience, Community, Simplicity, Humility, Hospitality, Prayer, Racial Reconciliation, Healing, Ecumenism, Christian Social Transformation, and Stability. A description of each of these rules can be found on page 6.
Residents — People who live and work at Richmond Hill. Residents are the primary providers of hospitality to people who come to the retreat center and they also keep the prayers for the City each day.

The Basics of Residency:

- People who commit to live and work at Richmond Hill typically sign on in 3 to 5 year intervals.
- Service Corps participants, even though committing for one to two years, are considered full residents in the community, with all privileges and responsibilities associated.
- There are also staff people at Richmond Hill who do not live in the building but do work here, tending the garden and administering our work with Richmond Public Schools or other community-based initiatives.

Formation Day — Community prayers and gatherings held on Wednesdays. Formation is what helps to bond the community through shared study and conversation. It is also a means through which we grow closer to God as individuals.

The Basics of Formation:

- Community Formation takes place primarily on Wednesdays, beginning with a Eucharist or Communion at 7:00 am.
- Residents of the community, including Service Corps participants, gather for study from 9:00 am to 10:30 am
- At 1:30 pm, there is “Staff Meeting” in which all the business of administering Richmond Hill ministries and retreat center is talked through and managed.
- At 5:00 pm, there is “Residents’ Meeting” when those who live in the community gather to discuss community life and catch up with one another.
- At 6:30 pm, there is a dinner for the Residents to have a quiet evening and to enjoy each other’s company.
- Service Corps participants also gather monthly to reflect on one of the Rules of Richmond Hill. (See the Rule on the following page.)
The Rule of Richmond Hill

**Conversion of life** — Living one’s life as a conversation with God, in a commitment to personal spiritual disciplines.

**Obedience** — Living one’s life in response to God’s will, in a commitment to the mission of the community.

**Community** — Living one’s life as life together, in a commitment to shared mission and a common life.

**Simplicity** — Living one’s life without excess, in a commitment to a modest use of resources that resists greed and consumerism.

**Humility** — Living one’s life in perspective, in a commitment to assess and honor one’s own gifts and those of others.

**Hospitality** — Living one’s life in service of others, in a commitment to welcome guests in love and a spirit of prayer.

**Prayer** — Practicing a spiritual discipline that includes daily prayer for metropolitan Richmond in concert with the Richmond Hill Community.

**Racial Reconciliation** — Examining oneself, paying attention to the particular wounds of race in metropolitan Richmond, and to the setting right of racial wrongs.

**Healing** — Committing one’s own life to inner healing and to the healing of the larger community of metropolitan Richmond.

**Ecumenism** — Honoring all expressions of Christian faith, respecting in Jesus’ name all persons of other religions and faiths.

**Christian Social Transformation** — Praying and working for the coming of the Kingdom of God in metropolitan Richmond.

**Stability** — Pledging to pray and work for the permanent transformation of the metropolitan city.
Application to the Richmond Hill Urban Service Corps

Date ________

Name  ________________________________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________________ City
                                                                                       State ______________ Zip ______________ Email
                                                                                       ________________________________________________________________________  Cell

Phone ______________ Other Phone ____________________________ Religious Affiliation ________________________________________________________________________

Education:  High School ___________________________________________________________________________

College (if applicable) ____________________________________________  Graduate (if applicable) __________________________________________

Please provide three people who will provide a reference for you. Please provide two references who are a pastor, mentor, teacher, or someone else who can attest to your commitment or spiritual life. Please also include one reference from a former employer. Please do not list family and friends as references.

Recommendation 1

Name  ________________________________________________________________________

Email  ________________________________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________________

Phone ______________ Relationship ____________________________________________

Recommendation 2

Name  ________________________________________________________________________

Email  ________________________________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________________

Phone ______________ Relationship ____________________________________________

Recommendation 3

Name  ________________________________________________________________________

Email  ________________________________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________________

Phone ______________ Relationship ____________________________________________
**Essay Questions**

*Please respond to the following questions and return your responses along with your application.*

1. Take a look at the Rule of Richmond Hill on page six. Which two rules most relate to your life so far and your sense of where you life’s mission is taking you? How do these two rules reflect who you are?

2. What do you hope to gain in your time in the Richmond Hill Urban Service Corps? How does this program fit within your career path? How might this experience interrupt your life’s plan?

3. Looking over the description of life at Richmond Hill in the previous pages, describe how you understand intentional community in a spiritual setting. What aspects of that life excite you? What aspects of that life concern you?