

Be the light.



Contents

Fiscal Year 2018 / July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

Program Engagement	4
2017 Rothko Chapel Biennial Óscar Romero Award	6
Explore Spirituality and Live Mindfully	8
Experience the Transformative Power of Art	10
Expanding the Chapel's Reach	12
Healing in Community Post Hurricane Harvey	14
Rothko Chapel as an Interfaith Model	16
Rothko Chapel Ambassadors—The Guild and Guides	18
Sharing Life Events and Religious Experiences	20
Opening Spaces	22
Moonrise Party	24
By the Numbers	26
Our Supporters	27
People Behind the Rothko Chapel	28

For 47 years, the Rothko Chapel has been a beloved and internationally recognized Houston landmark. The Rothko Chapel inspires people to action through art and contemplation, nurtures reverence for the highest aspirations of humanity, and provides a forum for global concerns. The Chapel is a sacred space that supports human rights and is a rallying place for all who are concerned with peace and freedom throughout the world.

Open Your Mind



DEAR FRIENDS,

Recovery, resiliency and restoration aptly describe the mission of the Rothko Chapel over the past year. To aid in the recovery from Hurricane Harvey, the Chapel opened its doors to the community to ensure that among the lost lives, destroyed homes and broken dreams, there was a constant presence and place for healing. Concerts, meditations, well-wishes and prayers from out-of-town visitors collectively reminded us that if we were going to recover from this disaster like others in the past, we would need to support one another and work together. Thankfully, the Rothko Chapel remained a place for community gatherings and renewal throughout the year, ensuring that those most impacted by the storm were not forgotten or left in isolation.

In the same vein, we were reminded that resiliency is an important aspect of life. This truth was made clear at the *2017 Rothko Chapel Óscar Romero Award* ceremony honoring Burundian Pierre Claver Mbonimpa and Houstonian Kathryn Griffin-Griñán. As we learned from both of our award recipients, there is a powerful force deep in the human spirit that allows one to thrive in spite of assassination attempts, family members killed, time spent in prison, and being sexually abused and trafficked. In the face of these challenges, these two courageous leaders continue to give back and work diligently to address injustice and inequities, particularly in the criminal justice system, so that everyone's dignity is affirmed and life is full of possibility.

The spirit of renewal was clearly seen in the further development of the Rothko Chapel *Opening Spaces* campaign, which has as its center the restoration of the Chapel and the transformation of the grounds in order to more fully serve the community and everyone who visits the Chapel. This past year, the Board of Directors approved the project designs, budget and construction schedule with the goal of completing the entire project by the end of 2022. Work begins in earnest in early 2019 with the initial focus on the Chapel restoration including a new skylight, interior lighting and a more inviting vestibule. Also included in this first phase of the project will be landscape enhancements, the building of a new visitor welcome house, construction of a new energy house, and making other infrastructure improvements that will make the Chapel less vulnerable to flooding and other weather related events. We are so grateful for everyone who has contributed to the *Opening Spaces* campaign to date and continue to welcome your gifts as we raise the \$30 million needed to complete this important project.

This past year, we welcomed and served more than 100,000 visitors from all over the world, making clear that the Rothko Chapel continues to be an important place for recovery, resiliency and restoration of the individual and community spirit through art, spirituality and the struggle for justice. As this report highlights, it is through the gifts of hundreds of individual and institutional donors that the Rothko Chapel is able to be open to all every day of the year, free of charge, and present the type of programming that enhances mutual respect, understanding and collective action.

We thank you for your support and look forward to our future work together.

Sincerely,

Christopher Rothko
Chair

David Leslie
Executive Director



Program Engagement



2017 Rothko Chapel Biennial Óscar Romero Award



“It is a magnanimous gesture of recognition and encouragement for ourselves and our colleagues in human rights activism in Burundi that calls us to continue to work with abnegation, to proceed against all odds until a rule of law is established in Burundi. May this award help awaken the conscience of human respect and dignity in Burundi, Africa, and throughout the world.”

- Pierre Claver Mbonimpa

“Thank you all, this is an honor. I want to be able to give back to the fight for human rights, civil rights... And this work, it don't stop until my casket drops.”

- Kathryn Griffin-Griñán

Named after Saint Óscar Romero, assassinated in 1980 by his opponents for his advocacy for the poor in El Salvador, this award honors human rights activists who challenge inequity and injustice. Like former Archbishop Romero, the 2017 honorees champion and give voice to poor and marginalized people and inspire generations of activists who work toward a world where violence, poverty and injustice no longer exist. The 2017 Óscar Romero Award pre-programs and ceremony marked the culmination of the Chapel's year-long criminal justice reform efforts, launched with the Spring 2017 Symposium: “An Act of Justice: Undoing the Legacy of Mass Incarceration.”

At the award ceremony held at the Rothko Chapel on November 12, 2017, the Chapel honored two recipients. The international awardee, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, is Executive Director of Association for the Protection of Prisoners and Human Rights in Burundi, east Africa. Houstonian Kathryn Griffin-Griñán is a Recovery Coach & Peer-To-Peer Counselor at Been There, Done That in Houston, Texas. Rev. Hannah Atkins opened with a prayer and moment of reflection, and Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis delivered the keynote speech. A reception on the plaza followed, which honored the recipients' courage and recognized the importance and impact of their work.

As part of the Óscar Romero Award programming, the Rothko Chapel presented a series to create context around the recipients' work. Programs included “Art and Incarceration: Poetry, Theatre and Music in and about Captivity” by the New York-based music collective Ensemble Pi; “Double Jeopardy: Women and the Criminal Justice System” with UK journalist Julie Bindel on the subject of global sex trafficking, and the untenable, daily situation faced by many women world wide; and “Silencing Opposition: Human Rights Violations in Burundi,” featuring former U.S. Ambassador to Burundi, Robert Krueger.

On the day following the Chapel's Óscar Romero Award ceremony, honored recipient Pierre Claver Mbonimpa visited with students from the College of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences and the Barbara Jordan Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University. Mr. Mbonimpa's discussion of his and others' life changing work in Burundi brought new awareness to the violence and human rights violations that are currently taking place in his home country. Appreciative students walked away humbled and inspired.

Explore Spirituality and Live Mindfully

The Rothko Chapel continues to explore holistic matters of the spirit and promote interfaith and intercultural understanding. Spiritually-focused programming included monthly meditations in the “Twelve Moments: Experiencing Spiritual and Faith Traditions” series; observances of several United Nations’ International Days of Recognition, including International Day of Peace, World AIDS Day, International Women’s Day, and World Environment Day; and the second and final year of the “Concept of the Divine” series.

“Concept of the Divine” presented speakers from diverse faith communities and sectors of society to share their personal spiritual journey, and to discuss how their spirituality has shaped their views of their place in the cosmos and impacted their service to community.

The series included a discussion on “A Navajo Perspective on the Reverence for Life” with Suzanne Benally, the first Indigenous Executive Director of Cultural Survival, and a presentation from Jerry Woodfill, former NASA Spacecraft Warning System Engineer, who shared his experience of the “divine acts” that rescued Apollo 13. It also featured a sold-out conversation with Ilia Delio, a Franciscan Sister from Washington, DC who bridges the spheres of science and religion. Speaking with Houston counselor and spiritual teacher Bill Kerley, she shared her personal concept of the Divine and how it changed in the course of her professional transformation from a scientist working in academia to a nun in the Catholic Church.

Another highlight was the observance of International Women’s Day, for which the Chapel hosted a small display of “The Monument Quilt” on the grounds. Showcasing a quilted collection of stories from survivors of rape and abuse, this project was organized by FORCE, a Baltimore-based activist collective dedicated to upsetting rape culture. To further recognize survivors of sexual violence in the wake of the #MeToo movement, the Chapel hosted an evening meditation with Claire Villarreal from Dawn Mountain Center for Tibetan Buddhism, and Shanti Flagg, FORCE’s Studio Director.



“The Moment Quilt”
International Women’s Day



Experience the Transformative Power of Art

The Rothko Chapel debuted several original live performances this season, including “Music of Peace and Reconciliation” by the Apollo Chamber Players for International Day of Peace; “Art and Incarceration: Poetry, Theatre and Music in and about Captivity” by New York-based Ensemble Pi; “Music and Spoken Word: The Sounds of El Salvador” by Trinity Jazz Ensemble, commemorating the anniversary of Saint Romero’s martyrdom; “Breath” by the Transitory Sound and Movement Collective; and “In a Moss Garden,” featuring performances by John Lane, Marty Regan, and Yoko Reikano Kimura in a unique program of new compositions for Japanese instruments that was offered in partnership with the Consulate-General of Japan in Houston.

The Chapel honored the life and living legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with the program “Monumental Decisions: Art, Politics, and Social Responsibility.” In response to nationwide discussions of public monuments’ histories and intentions, artist Ed Dwight shared his experiences as a sculptor who began making public art in the United States in the 1970s, a time when few monuments chronicled the history of African Americans. The conversation, which included Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis and Texas Southern University Art Historian and Curator Dr. Alvia Wardlaw, focused on growing the movement to replace public monuments and memorials that represent hate and division with those that promote equality and possibility.

In partnership with Houston Grand Opera and in conjunction with their initiative *Seeking the Human Spirit*, the Chapel hosted a conversation exploring arts and activism in today’s society. Participants included Peter Sellars, renowned opera and theater director and professor at UCLA; Debbie McNulty, Director of Mayor Turner’s Office of Cultural Affairs; and Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director of Houston Grand Opera. Moderated by the Rothko Chapel’s Executive Director David Leslie, the program explored questions such as: What is the role of the arts as commentator and catalyst for social justice? And what is the responsibility of cultural institutions and patrons for preserving the arts as a voice for the public? The panelists addressed these questions from their perspectives as artist, funder, and cultural institution, while acknowledging the profound impact art has had on their and others’ lives.

“Breath” by the Transitory Sound and Movement Collective



Expanding the Chapel's Reach



Healing in Community Post Hurricane Harvey

International Day of Peace
Apollo Chamber Players

Holding Space

As the Chapel was developing its 2017-18 season, never in our wildest dreams did we imagine Hurricane Harvey and the devastation it would cause from South Texas to Louisiana. All of us at the Rothko Chapel know, through personal experience and the stories of others, the depth and breadth of the storm's physical and spiritual impact. The destruction of property and the loss of life make us mindful of how powerful these weather systems can be and how vulnerable we truly are. At the same time, the outpouring of support reminds us of the generosity, love, and awareness of human interconnection that are intrinsic to each one of us.

The Chapel was undamaged and reopened its doors on August 30, 2017 with an invitation to the community to come for rest and renewal in the company of others, and in the presence of Mark Rothko's monumental canvasses. In September and October, the Chapel hosted weekly noontime meditations, offering a supportive place of healing and fellowship for all impacted by the storm. Those who attended these meditative times, as well as the 33rd Annual Houston Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on the theme of "Helping Each Other," were able to share stories of loss and remarkable resiliency. Divisions and differences gave way to strengthened relationships as we all recovered from the hurricane's destruction.

International Day of Peace Observation and Harvey Relief Concert

Our annual *International Day of Peace Observation* featured the Apollo Chamber Players performing music of peace and reconciliation. Proceeds were donated to Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston to support their efforts to help homebound seniors and refugee families suffering in the wake of Harvey.

We are aware that the recovery phase for Houston will take years, and the need for community and spiritual support will be ongoing. On the day that the Chapel reopened after the storm, a visitor wrote in the guest book, "...I'm thankful for today. And, thank you, for being open today. I am recharged and ready to move forward together." Rothko Chapel is thankful to be an important part of the community fabric where people from all walks of life, and all parts of the city, can come together to heal in silence, meditation, song, and conversation. Individually and collectively, we will continue to discover new ways to live, work, and serve in the days ahead.



Rothko Chapel as an Interfaith Model

Rothko Chapel Inspires Creation of an Interfaith Spiritual Center on the Campus of Tecnológico de Monterrey (Mexico)

Executive Director David Leslie gave talks on February 20 and 21, 2018 at the Tecnológico de Monterrey (Mexico)—better known as Tec—at the invitation of faculty and staff who had expressed interest in the Rothko Chapel as they sought to create a space for meditation and interfaith engagement on Tec’s main campus. The relationship with Tec began in 2016, when a group of faculty and staff spent two days at the Chapel to learn about the Chapel’s history, programming and operations. After their visit, the university opened a temporary space for meditation and relaxation—Punto Blanca. David was invited to speak at Tec’s first year anniversary celebrations, where he discussed the Chapel and the roles of sacred spaces for individuals and communities. The Institute is pursuing the opening of similar spaces on other campuses and building a permanent space on the main campus.

Rothko Chapel Advises Creator of Awty Meditation Center

Nicolas Feder, an 11th grade student at The Awty International School in Spring Branch, unveiled the Awty Meditation Center in the spring of 2018. Meditation pillows, a gliba for Muslim students, Bibles, Torahs and other religious texts fill the former classroom that now provides a peaceful space for students as they cope with the pressures of academic and everyday life. Nicolas began to develop this idea as an attendee of the National Student Diversity Leadership Conference. Inspired to promote inclusion through religious diversity at his school, he visited the Rothko Chapel and received advice from Ashley Clemmer, Director of Programs and Community Engagement. Ashley spoke of the Chapel’s purpose as a respectful, welcoming space for the practice of all spiritual traditions, and as a community where each person’s unique story and beliefs are accepted and celebrated. Nicolas was also introduced to Chapel Advisor Dr. Alejandro Chaoul who visited the Awty Meditation Center just after it opened to teach students how to transform lives through meditation.



Rothko Chapel Ambassadors— The Guild and Guides

Guild

The Chapel Guild celebrated its 5th anniversary in 2017 and honored eight Founding Guild members who have served since 2012. The Guild continues to provide invaluable support services for daily Chapel operations and events. Guild members welcome guests, orient visitors to the Chapel, provide hospitality for public programs, and represent the Chapel in offsite community festivals and events.

Guild members took part in educational opportunities throughout the year to enrich their own knowledge and experience of the Chapel. Highlights included a sacred spaces lecture and tour of the University of St. Thomas' Chapel of St. Basil and the Menil Collection's Byzantine Fresco Chapel by UST Art History professor Dr. Charles Stewart, and a presentation on the construction of sacred spaces by UH Architecture Professor Dr. Nora Laos.



“I really enjoy greeting visitors and never cease to be inspired and uplifted by their reactions—whatever reason has brought them there, it always seems to give them whatever they were looking for—peace, solace, freedom, a sense of self and their place in the universe. I find that remarkable. I’d like others to have the same experience that I’ve been so fortunate to have. I can’t think of any other institution anywhere that offers what the chapel does, and that does it with such grace and generosity, open to all, free of charge, every day of the year, and providing, with its many programs and offerings, such a rich assortment of human experiences and inspirations.”

– Guild Member Gabrielle Cosgriff

“There is no doubt in my mind that this space moves most people who visit, to pray, to meditate, to contemplate. I am glad I am part of a community that makes these experiences possible for thousands of people from around the globe.”

– Guild Member Juan Palomo

Guides

Throughout the year, the Chapel Guides led informative visits for over 1,100 visitors, including groups from the International Women’s Forum, Harvard University Graduate School in Urban Planning and Design, the Dia Art Foundation, the City of Paris Museum of Modern Art, and the Women’s Home through the Institute for Spirituality and Health. They collaborated with the conservation department at the Menil Collection to welcome and provide historical information to participants in the American Institute for Conservation Annual Meeting. The Chapel Guides also created a new continuing education initiative centered on learning new styles of guiding and creating space for inspiration and reflection, beginning with a guided visit to the Houston Heritage Society and a year-end refresher-training workshop.



Guild Volunteer hours: **1,741**

47 guided tours with **1,104** total visitors

203 group visits with **2,977** total visitors

Sharing Life Events and Religious Experiences

Since its opening and dedication, the Chapel hosted services such as weddings, memorials, blessing ceremonies, christenings, bar and bat mitzvahs, and regular religious services for congregations both locally and internationally. The Chapel provides a uniquely spiritual space for experiencing significant life events and religious traditions. This year, the Chapel hosted twelve weddings, six memorials, and religious services that included quarterly Jewish Shabbat services for Congregation Shma Koleinu, an annual Christian Ash Wednesday service for Covenant Church, and a session for the World Community of Christian Meditation "Inner Room" retreat. Through these services, the Chapel welcomed over 1,500 guests.



Photo by Nichols Photographers



Weddings

12 Total services
539 Total guests

Memorials

6 Total services
441 Total guests

Religious Services

5 Total services

"This is the only place I would consider having a memorial service for my daughter because she was an artist. Thank you for maintaining such a beautiful space."

"My wedding was unlike any other and I will cherish the memory. The Chapel was the perfect setting, the skylight provided an unexpected drama to the ceremony, as light moved across the space at key moments."

"It was perfect for my mother's memorial service, she was an artist who enjoyed the Rothko Chapel during her life."

"An experience I will cherish for life. My friends and family loved it and it was a brilliant location to honor and remember my beloved wife."

"This space, for me, has always been a very powerful space of energy and of peace and of meaning. I think these paintings of Rothko are like icons. You don't pray to an icon, you pray with an icon. You don't just look at an icon, you see through it."

- Father Laurence Freeman



OPENING spaces

A Campaign for the Rothko Chapel

In June 2017 the final master plan was approved by the Chapel Board of Directors. Over the next twelve months the Chapel collaborated with project partners Architecture Research Office (ARO), lighting designers George Sexton Associates and landscape architects Nelson Byrd Woltz to develop an innovative and holistic architectural, landscaping and lighting intervention that pays tribute to the Chapel's original design while addressing critical infrastructure needs. The design approach and materials for *Opening Spaces* were informed by a year-long feasibility study guided by the goals of the project and the founders' original intent. This process involved extensive historical research; consultation with a wide range of primary sources; analysis of existing building conditions; investigations into the building's construction and previous interventions; interviews with parties knowledgeable about the Chapel's history; community conversations and feedback; and the preparation of numerous rehabilitation and planning options. Central to the project are sustainability plans and efforts to ensure the landmark's future for generations to come.



The resulting final master plan re-envision the Chapel's campus and facilities through the following elements:

RESTORE THE CHAPEL with a reconfigured skylight, lighting design and entryway, allowing for the paintings and space to be experienced as they were intended by Mark Rothko and Dominique and John de Menil. The vestibule will be returned to an open configuration providing a seamless transition between the entrance and sanctuary. Louvers will provide a gentle light that will preserve the paintings while enhancing their presentation.

CONSTRUCT A NEW NORTH CAMPUS, open to the public, featuring three new buildings and one renovated bungalow:

- ❖ Visitor Welcome House, which will house didactic and historical displays, a bookstore and gift shop, and will serve as a gathering point for groups and tours
- ❖ Administration and Archives Building, which will foster research and support expanded operations

- ❖ Program Center, which will accommodate an enriched range of public programs, receptions and presentations, including dance, music, exhibitions and film screenings, as well as symposia, lectures and workshops
- ❖ New energy facility with second-floor placement of mechanical and control equipment and a new back-up generator, to ensure the Chapel's protection from weather disasters; landscape and drainage improvements will also work to safeguard the campus
- ❖ Guest House, a renovated bungalow which will host Chapel speakers and special guests, as well as artists and scholars in residence

ENHANCE THE CHAPEL'S LANDSCAPING AND GREENSPACES, creating a unified campus that preserves and defines a sense of quiet sanctuary. Specific additions and benefits from this scope of work include:

- ❖ Tranquil new garden spaces for reflection
- ❖ A more hospitable and fluid transition between the Chapel grounds and Menil park
- ❖ Dozens of new trees to provide welcome shade and screen the grounds from increased commercial activity in the neighborhood
- ❖ More beautiful planting and improved seating around the *Broken Obelisk* sculpture by Barnett Newman
- ❖ Converting nearly an acre of current space to expansive public and programmatic use



- ❖ Honoring and preserving the character of the Chapel's immediate neighborhood and upholding our role as a valued community partner

GROW OUR ENDOWMENT to maintain restored and new properties while supporting expanded programming and operations.

Illuminating the Next 50 Years

With new and enhanced facilities and grounds comes the capacity to expand programming, outreach and interaction with greater numbers of constituents and partners who reflect Houston's diverse community. The restored Rothko Chapel building will enhance the visitor's spiritual engagement with the artwork and the sense of sanctuary that facilitates community connection and dialogue. The total cost of the campus master plan is \$30 million. The Rothko Chapel will meet its fundraising goal in two distinct phases related to the restoration and construction timeline. Securing full philanthropic funding for this project from individuals, foundations and corporations is the chief priority of the Rothko Chapel's *Opening Spaces* campaign.

Moonrise Party

The Rothko Chapel's bi-annual Moonrise Party successfully raised much needed funds for the Chapel's 2017-18 program season. Held on the evening of March 23 in the Gallery at MATCH (Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston), the Moonrise Party celebrated the mission of the Rothko Chapel and the 110th birthday of its co-founder, Dominique de Menil.

Over 200 guests enjoyed delicious bites and authentic tacos by Cuchara along with astrology readings and photo booth fun. DJ Mexican Blackbird spun an eclectic selection of tunes from her extensive vinyl collection, and Como Las Movies wowed the crowd with NuevoWave dance beats all the way from Austin.

Executive Director David Leslie got the evening off to a celebratory start with a toast to Dominique de Menil, co-founder of the Chapel and the inspiration for the work that the Chapel strives to do in service to the Houston community: "Mindful of a person who was faithful to her nature and whose power of influence is still felt today, I want to offer a toast to Dominique de Menil on the occasion of her 110th birthday. This is a toast of gratitude for her and John de Menil's ability to gather so many talented people, much like the wonderful group we have here at Moonrise, who envisioned, created and ensured that the Rothko Chapel would contribute to the betterment of the world in so many ways!"

Moonrise Party guests included Rothko Chapel board members and long-time donors, along with new faces who fit right in with the fun and lively crowd. Many stayed late to dance the night away while toasting the moon and the mission of the Chapel.



Moonrise Party Underwriters

Blue Moon \$5,000

Adelaide de Menil Carpenter
Laura Fain
Lynn Wyatt

Honey Moon \$2,500

Heather and Sandy Dow
Linbeck Group LLC
Krysia Lynes
Michael Piana
Arwa and Aziz Shaibani

Flower Moon \$1,000

Suzanne Deal Booth
Rauf Diab
Kristina Van Dyke Fort and Jeff Fort
Mila Golovine
Louise Jamail
Brooke and D. Carlos Silva
Kate and Armando Silva
Phoebe and Bobby Tudor
James Vincent

Harvest Moon Host Committee

Bennie Flores Ansell and David Ansell
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Tatiana and Craig Massey
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Jessica Phifer
Amity Reeves
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Mark Sullivan
Jill Whitten and Rob Proctor

New Moon

Maconda and Sacha Abinader
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Katy Atkiss
Kim and Sean Ballesteros
J. Alexander Blackman
Jody Blazek and David Crossley
Marcela and Fernando Brave
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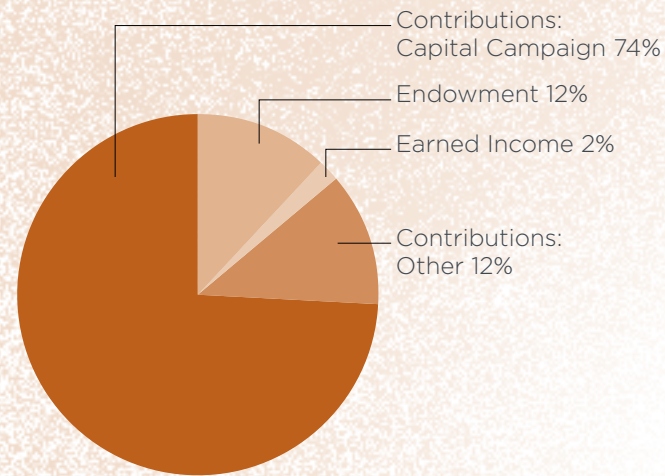
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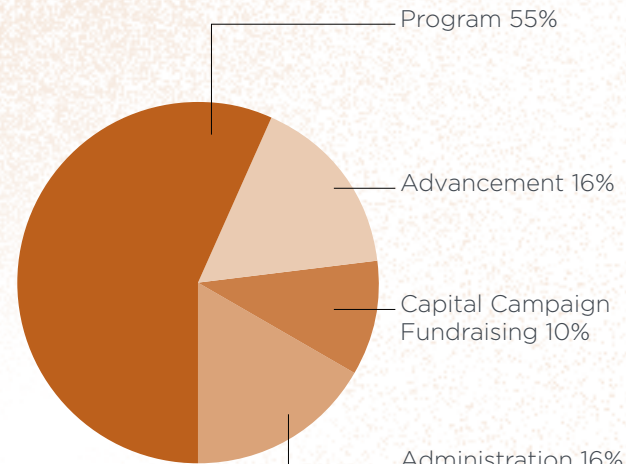
By The Numbers

**For Fiscal Year 2018
July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018**

The data are derived from the audited financial statements of the Rothko Chapel as of June 30, 2018.



**Revenue
\$5,411,896**



**Expenses
\$1,427,127**

Our Supporters

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

The Rothko Chapel would like to thank those who have contributed in 2017-2018.

For more information about making a gift, please contact the Advancement Office at 713.660.1409.

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We have made every effort to be accurate in our listing and apologize if any mistakes or omissions have been made.

People Behind the Rothko Chapel

As the old proverb states, “it takes a village”— in this case, to preserve the Rothko Chapel as a sacred art space open to all, every day of the year. Thanks in large part to the dedication and efforts of the individuals named here, the Rothko Chapel is able to cultivate and host a vibrant selection of public programs, engage with visitors on numerous levels, preserve the artwork, building and grounds, create an accepting and respectful spiritual space for visitors every day, and extend the Chapel’s reach within its community and beyond.

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