

Lenten Guided Prayer 2017

***Restore Us,
Oh God!***



A Congregation Information Packet for Lent 2017

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A ministry of Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada
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Lenten Guided Prayer 2016

Restore us, Oh God!



Welcome to Lenten Guided Prayer

Do you long for a resource that integrates prayer and scripture into daily life? This seven week prayer process does just that. Using the same scripture readings many congregations use in Sunday worship during the season of Lent, participants practice forms of contemplative prayer and become more aware of the Spirit of God moving in our lives.

Rooted in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC), these materials are now used by churches, schools and organizations throughout Canada and the US, and are available to all.

This year's theme "**Restore us, Oh God!**" invites us to face both the limits of our humanity and our need for divine transformation.

Through **personal reflection** and time spent with familiar and powerful scripture stories, we will give ourselves to the slow way of deep change. Those who meet in **weekly small groups** listen as others share their experience of prayer throughout the week, and discern what they would like to share in turn.

Attached to this welcome letter is the **Lenten Guided Prayer packet for 2017** which contains all the resources you need except for the 2017 prayer sheets. These **prayer sheets will be emailed** by early February to all groups or individuals who register to participate.

With Lent beginning on March 1st, please **register to participate** ASAP. The **registration cost** is \$40/congregation. If your congregation is not registering you may register to receive the materials as an individual for \$20. **You will find the registration details on page 8.**

We look forward to you joining with us on the journey of Lenten Guided Prayer.

*Jane Kuepfer, Lenten Guided Prayer coordinator
Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada*

*We are grateful to *Leader* magazine for permission to use their Winter 2017 issue as a resource in preparing Lenten Guided Prayer sheets for 2017. Permission granted for use. www.leaderonline.org.

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How Lenten Guided Prayer (LPG) works

Individual Prayer Time Three or four days each week, participants agree to pray meditatively for 15-20 minutes/day on their own with one of the chosen Biblical texts from the previous Sunday.

Small Groups Once a week, participants meet in small groups (ideally 3-4 persons) with a designated group facilitator from within the congregation to share their experiences of prayerfully entering these scripture texts. This small group time is flexible to your situation. It can happen on Sunday morning during Christian Formation/Sunday School hour or at another time during the week. A congregation may have just one or several small groups meeting at different times, or may gather all participants together at one time and split into small groups for sharing. It is important to note these small groups are not discussion groups but rather times when people share reflections from their personal contemplative prayer experiences.

When Do We Begin? We suggest participants receive their first prayer sheet and begin the Lenten Guided Prayer experience on **Sunday March 5th**, using the texts from that Sunday. Small groups should plan to meet for the first time sometime in the week that follows, up until and including Sunday March 12th, when participants will receive their second prayer sheet. We pray with the texts *following* the Sunday they are used in worship in hopes of deepening our experience of them.

Be Creative We encourage you to be creative with how you use the LPG resources. To encourage wider involvement, some churches simply distribute the prayer sheets to interested people in their congregation. Individual prayer sheets can easily be attached to a congregation-wide email or linked to your church website. **Resources can also be used to lead a retreat.**

Anticipating the Lenten Guided Prayer Process (for participants)

Participating in this 7 week experience will take you on a journey of discovery and challenge. As you pray with the scripture texts for Lent, you will be invited to face both the limits of our humanity and our need for divine transformation.

Using the Weekly Prayer Sheets

Each week you will receive a Prayer Sheet to guide you. (See sample on page 6 & 7.) Throughout Lenten Guided Prayer (LGP), we will be practicing contemplative prayer which invites you to notice how God's spirit is moving within your everyday life experience. Contemplative prayer is about listening, pondering, and wondering. We do this using the lens of scripture, in particular readings from the Sundays during Lent.

Each sheet introduces you to the theme of the week and provides different suggestions for how to pray with the scriptures. Expect that some of the prayer exercises will easily draw you in, while others might stretch you into new ways of praying and responding. Since there are many prayer suggestions, it is not expected that you will pray with each one listed. Be open to how ever God leads you to express your prayer. There is no limit to how contemplative prayer can happen and where it can lead you. The key is that whatever you do, you do it in a prayerful, reflective way. Our hope is that through these prayers options, the themes of the Lenten texts can interact deeply with your life experience.

Sharing and Responding in the Weekly Small Group

For those who participate in a small group, each week a group of 2 to 4 people meet with a group facilitator to share with each other some of their prayer experiences. People share only those things they feel comfortable sharing from their prayer times. Perhaps they share recorded reflections from their journal; perhaps some created artwork; perhaps a hymn or something they saw during a walking prayer that caught their attention.

The Small Group Process (for group leaders)

(Groups of approx. 3-4 persons)

The purpose of the small group is to provide opportunity to share one's experience of God, learnings and struggles with a few others who are also open to share and to listen. It is important that the group pay careful attention to each member in turn, and honour their sharing. It is not meant to be a lively discussion group, but rather have the relaxed feel of time with trusted companions.

The suggested process for a group meeting includes a welcome and reminder of the group's purpose. Scripture from the past week might be read aloud if desired.

Each participant is then given opportunity, in turn, to share from their experience of prayer during the past week, while the others simply listen (without commenting).

It is helpful to plan for a minute or two of silence after each individual shares, to allow everyone to reflect, and then to take a few minutes for the group to comment on what seemed significant to them in what was shared (ie. Where did you sense God at work?). Another quiet time, of a minute or so, can help group members relax and be ready to hear the next person's sharing.

When all have shared and been have heard it is appropriate for the group facilitator to pray a prayer of gratitude and blessing for the week that is past and the week that is ahead.

* [A more detailed format](#) for leading a small group process is available if it would be helpful for you.

If you have questions or need more information, please feel free to contact the registrar at mennospiritdir@gmail.com

Lenten Guided Prayer 2016

Living Ink (Sample Prayer Sheet from 2016)



Prayer Sheet 1: Letting Go of the Pen

Week starting February 14

Call to Prayer

Consider creating a space for prayer in your home or office if you do not already have one, and gather any items that may help you to engage with the prayer options more fully; for example, a Bible, journal and pen, art supplies, symbol that is meaningful to you, music, etc. As you prayerfully open yourself to God's presence, you may choose to light a candle to acknowledge that this is a space set apart from the busyness of life.

Opening Prayer: *Author of Life, guide my way on this Lenten journey.*

Meditative Reading

Read **Deuteronomy 26.1-11** and/or **Luke 4.1-13** slowly and reflectively. Notice if there is a word or phrase that stands out to you, or touches a particular area of your life.

For Reflection

- Take a moment to set your intention for your Lenten journey. What burdens, questions, or hopes do you bring? What are you seeking at this time in your life?
- Have there been times in your life when you have needed to "let go of the pen" and trust God to author your story? What did you learn about yourself and about God during such times?

Prayer Options

Select a prayer suggestion from this list that spark interest or feel stretching for you. You may stay with one way of praying throughout the week, or engage with several options.

Praying with Scripture The 40 days of Lent are based on the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, fasting and facing temptations, before he began his ministry. Lent is a journey in which we are invited to walk with Jesus toward the cross. Begin this journey by entering the story of Luke 4:1-13. Read the account of Jesus's temptation through so that you are familiar with the broad movements of the story; then, imaginatively place yourself as an observer in the story and allow it to play in your imagination. Watch the interactions between Jesus and the devil. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? Is there anything that you need to say to Jesus? Is there anything that Jesus says to you?

Thoughts and Reflections

Praying through storytelling Storytelling will be a theme throughout this guided prayer journey. Both the Old and New Testament texts this week share stories of deliverance from the wilderness. The Deuteronomy text gives instructions for the giving of first fruits in remembrance of Israel's liberation from Egypt and the Luke text outlines the story of Jesus's temptations. Reflect on a wilderness time in your life. Explore the ways in which you came to the end of your resources and had to rely on God or support beyond yourself for deliverance. Tell that story using words, movement, music, or art. You may choose to do this in the form of a psalm, as your prayer to God.

Praying with music Listen to, sing or play these musical selections as prayer. If you do not own the hymn books, you may be able to borrow them from your church.

Be thou my vision Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB) 545
Be thou my vision [Youtube:](#) Be thou my vision by 4Him (Celtic Version)
I surrender all [Youtube:](#) I surrender all, parkway worship ministry
In the stillness of the evening HWB 551

Praying with movement Releasing and letting go are often themes in the spiritual life. Some of what needs to be released is held in our bodies in the form of tension. Notice where you hold tension in your body. In prayer, share with God what you are noticing and ask if it is time for this tension to be released. Listen for God's response and, when it's time, allow your body to guide you in letting go through mindful stretching, gentle movement, and deep breaths. If you'd like to take this further, walking, running, or dancing can be a full-body act of release.

Praying for our world In Deuteronomy 26:1-11 God brings a persecuted group of people out of their oppression and leads them to a land of their own. Pray for all those who have been displaced or who live under oppressive conditions, both locally and globally. You may include the words of the Jesus Prayer: *Kyrie, eleison. Lord, have mercy.*

Closing Prayer

*Author of Life,
I confess that there have been times when I have tried to author my own story
and I have fallen short. I release my desire for control and offer to you my life as
living ink, trusting you to hold the pen.
Amen.*

Review what you have experienced during your prayer times. Decide what is meant for you alone, and what you are comfortable sharing if you are meeting with your group. ***Lenten Guided Prayer 2016 is a ministry of Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada in cooperation with MCEC.***

Registration Instructions for Lenten Guided Prayer 2017

Choose a Lenten Guided Prayer (LGP) Coordinator (a pastor, elder, or other interested person) who will:

- a) **Promote** the Lenten Guided Prayer experience within your congregation
- b) **Recruit** group facilitators. If they are new to LGP, please encourage them to **view the video** found at commonword.ca/go/62 and review the printed instructions provided. If there are questions, please email the LGP registrar at mennospiritdir@gmail.com.
- c) **Distribute** prayer sheets to group facilitators and participants along with "Anticipating the Lenten Guided Prayer Process" and "Small Group Process"

Please **Register Online** by **January 31, 2017** or ASAP afterwards. You can also register by going to the **Mennonite Spiritual Directors Eastern Canada** website.

Registration Fee

Congregation/Organization \$40
Individual \$20
Mennonite Spiritual Directors Eastern Canada, no fee

Send to: *Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada
c/o Waterloo North Mennonite Church
100 Benjamin Rd Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2V 2J9*

MSDEC will email the prayers sheets and a complete LGP resource packet, three weeks before the beginning of Lent.

Lenten Guided Prayer Retreats

1. *Eating from the Tree of Life*

A Saturday morning Lenten Contemplative Retreat For both extroverts and introverts

**Mannheim Mennonite Church, 1494 Bleams Rd., Petersburg, Ontario
Saturday, March 4, 2017, 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon
Leader: Gord Alton**

In the Garden of Eden story, there are actually two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. What does it mean to eat from the Tree of Life? What does it mean to eat from the Tree of Knowledge? And why does God instruct the first humans to not eat of the Tree of Knowledge for they will surely die... meaning that they will stop eating from the Tree of Life? What happens to us when we eat from the wrong tree?

After a time of centering prayer, Gord will share a teaching to help you enter into the mystery of this text. Following this teaching, people will have the option to explore contemplatively a set of questions alone or in groups of two or three. Following this time of contemplation, there will be a time of group reflection and closing worship.

2. *Why are you Weeping?*

***Seeking the Risen Christ in an Age of Terror* A Saturday morning Post Easter Contemplative Retreat**

**Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, 15 George St., Waterloo, ON
Saturday, April 22, 2017, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Leader: Margaret Nally**

Seeking and finding peace in these days is a process of discerning the daily presence of the Risen Christ among us. When we are willing to sit with the discipline of reflecting, pondering and meditating and in the process, confront our fears, anxieties and concerns, we are allowing Easter to be a fully integrated experience. The seeking is the journey that enlivens our encounters with goodness and an overwhelming awareness of God's mercy.

"When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me, I shall let you find me" Jeremiah 29:13

Come for a morning to recollect the story and deepen the Lenten journey you took to Easter. Opening and closing with prayer, together we will explore the concepts of discovering signs of hope. The range of response includes walking with another to experience your own Emmaus journey; working with colour and form to give voice to a deeper understanding of the Spirituality of renewal; exploring in word, silence, song and story the desire to encounter the Risen Christ in ourselves and in our world.

Retreat Registration Information:

Cost: \$20 Payable to MSDEC at the retreat
Register: Deadline is 5 days before the event
Contact: Amy Kuepfer, Retreat Coordinator
519-301-9137 or mennospiritdir@gmail.com

Promoting Lenten Guided Prayer in your Congregation

a) Sample Bulletin Announcement (For Church Bulletins during January/February 2017)

Lenten Guided Prayer 2017: Sunday March 5 – Sunday April 16 (Easter)

An opportunity to integrate prayer and scripture into daily life. The theme “Restore Us, Oh God!” invites us to face both the limits of our humanity and our need for divine transformation. Engage scripture readings on your own, then share from your experience in a weekly small group. For more info, see MC Canada website (commonword.ca/go/62).

Please indicate your interest to _____ by _____.

b) *Restore Us, Oh God!* promotional poster (page 11)

c) Retreat Poster: *Eating from the tree of life* (page 12)

d) Retreat Poster: *Why Are You Weeping?* (page 13)

Restore Us, Oh God!

Lenten Guided Prayer 2017



Sunday, March 5 to Sunday, April 16 (Easter)

**Join with others in your congregation and throughout Mennonite Church Canada
by entering prayerfully into the Bible readings for Lent.**

Participants in the Lenten Guided Prayer Experience will:

- Pray with the Lenten scripture texts at home 3 to 4 days/week
- Meet weekly with a facilitator and 2 or 3 other participants to share from your life of prayer
- For more information, go online to CommonWord Bookstore & Resource Centre

If interested in participating, contact _____
(congregational contact)

Sponsored by the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada together with MCEC

Eating from the Tree of Life



A Saturday Morning Lenten Contemplative Retreat for both extroverts and introverts

Saturday, March 4, 9 a.m. to 12 noon
Mannheim Mennonite Church,
1494 Bleams Rd. Petersburg

Leader: Gord Alton
Cost: \$20 payable at retreat to MSDEC.

Register by contacting Amy Kuepfer
519-301-9137/mennospiritdir@gmail.com

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Why are you Weeping?

Seeking the Risen Christ in an Age of Terror



A Post-Easter Retreat

Saturday April 22, 9 a.m. - 12 noon
WK United Mennonite Church, 15 George St. Waterloo

Leader: Margaret Nally
Cost: \$20 payable at retreat to MSDEC

Register by contacting Amy Kuepfer
519-301-9137/mennospiritdir@gmail.com

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