

Lenten Guided Prayer 2019

Prayers of Grit & Grace

Congregational Information Packet

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A ministry of Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada



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Welcome to Lenten Guided Prayer 2019

A Lent resource for individuals, small groups and congregations

Rooted in the Lectionary Scripture texts for the season and inspired by the worship themes of [Leader Magazine](#), Lenten Guided Prayer invites you into deeper engagement with God, scripture, yourself, one another, and the world. Each of the six weekly prayer sheets offers questions for reflection and several prayer activities that help you engage with the everyday grit and grace of life. Lenten Guided Prayer also provides an outline for small group facilitation, including an opening and closing liturgy, should you have the opportunity to meet with a small group to share in your Lenten journey.

This Congregational Resource Packet contains all the resources you will need for planning a Lenten Guided Prayer experience at your church including ideas for how LGP may be used, participant and small group facilitator guides, a sample Prayer Sheet from Week 1, bulletin announcement and poster. The prayer sheets are not included in this packet but will be emailed to those who register.

This year Lent begins on Wednesday, March 6. **Online registration** is available through www.commonword.ca beginning on January 8, 2019. The cost is \$20 for individuals and \$40 for groups/congregations. Once registered, our registrar will email the weekly Prayer Guides along with the invoice. This year we are offering the Prayer Guides in two formats: as a 5 ½ by 8 ½ booklet or individually in a 8 ½ by 11 format (ideal for emailing weekly to participants). Please contact mennospiritdir@gmail.com if you have any questions.

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

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*We are grateful to *Leader* magazine for permission to use their Winter 2019 issue as a resource in preparing Lenten Guided Prayer sheets for 2019. Permission granted for use. www.leaderonline.org.

*Artwork credit: Anna Kuepfer

How Lenten Guided Prayer Works

Individual Prayer Time The heart of the Lenten Guided Prayer experience is engaging with a weekly prayer sheet, which provides prayerful reflection on selected biblical lectionary readings for the week as well as questions for reflection and suggestions for a variety of additional ways to pray throughout the week if you wish to explore some new ways to pray. While all the prayer options are contemplative in nature, we encourage you to set aside quiet time for prayer and also consider using some of the prayer options to pray on the go. See Sample Prayer Sheet (insert link).

Small Groups For those who choose to meet with a small group, participants meet weekly with a designated group facilitator to share their experiences of prayer. This small group time is flexible to your situation. It can happen on Sunday morning 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 for the Christian Formation/Sunday School hour and then split into small groups for sharing. It is important to note these small groups are not discussion groups but rather times when each person is given the opportunity to share reflections from their personal contemplative prayer experiences while the rest of the group listens. Sharing prayer experiences in this way deepens the transformative possibilities within the LGP journey. A liturgy has been provided for the first and final group meetings, should you wish to mark the beginning and end of LGP with a ritual.

When Do We Begin? Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 6. The opening liturgy could serve as material for an Ash Wednesday service. Some individuals and congregations choose to use the prayer sheets to *prepare* for the upcoming Sunday, while others will use the prayer sheets in the *week following* the texts being used in Sunday worship to deepen their experience. Note that if you are using prayer sheets in the preceding week for preparation, you will be dwelling in Holy Week before Palm Sunday.

Be Creative! We encourage you use the LGP resources in whatever way works best for your context. LGP may be used by households, ministry teams, community groups, or in spiritual direction settings. Whether a small group option is offered or not, some churches distribute the prayer sheets to interested people in their congregation or attach them to a congregation-wide email. Elements of the prayer sheets may also be incorporated into worship.

Retreats The ideas on the weekly prayer sheets - particularly the opening and closing liturgies - could be used as a jumping off point for a 1/2 day or full day retreat. Open the retreat with scripture and a time of communal prayer, give plenty of space in the middle for silence and for participants to engage with the prayer sheets on their own, and then close with sharing and communal prayer. You may choose to bring in the resource of a spiritual director who could facilitate this type of retreat for your small group or congregation.

Introduction to Lenten Guided Prayer: Participant Guide

Anticipating the theme and process: Participating in this 6-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 consider how God is present in the gritty or difficult places in life in order to find the grace and hope.

Using the Weekly Prayer Sheets: Each week you will have a Prayer Sheet to guide you. 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, through listening, pondering, and wondering. We do this using the lens of scripture - in particular, the Lectionary 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 however 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 - even if it means getting curious about your resistance. Our hope is that through these prayer options, the themes of the Lenten texts can interact deeply with your life experience.

- **Praying with scripture** is an opportunity to dig deeper into a story or words from the Bible and consider how it speaks to you.
- **Praying through your life** invites us to be aware of God's presence in our everyday lives as we go about our days. This option may also invite you to consider praying creatively, in nature or with movement.
- **Praying with music** provides song selections for those who connect to God and pray through music. You may choose to sing or play the songs for yourself; youtube links are also provided as available so that you can also listen to the musical selections.
- **Praying for our world** challenges us to consider/notice where God's Spirit is present and moving in the world around us and invites us to live out God's hope in intentional ways.

Sharing and Responding in the Weekly Small Group

For those who participate in a small group (we recommend 3-4 people), each week you will meet with a group facilitator to share some of your prayer experiences. People share only those things they feel comfortable sharing from their prayer times. Perhaps they share recorded reflections from their journal, some created artwork, a hymn that resonated, a calling they felt, what felt challenging, or something they saw that caught their attention.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual directors are available to help you process your prayer experience throughout and beyond this time of Lent. To find a spiritual director visit:

- Mennonite Spiritual Directors at: mennospiritualdirectors.weebly.com
- Spiritual Directors International (SDI) at: sdiworld.org

Small Group Process: Facilitator Guide

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

1. Promote the Lenten Guided Prayer experience within your congregation
2. Recruit group facilitators and provide them with a copy of this Facilitators Guide.
3. Distribute prayer sheets to participants along with a copy of the Participant Guide.

Group size Groups of approximately 3-4 persons are recommended to allow for adequate time for each person to share.

The purpose of the small group is to provide opportunity to share one's experience of God, one's 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 facilitator's role is to take responsibility for organizing a place and time for the group to gather, to distribute prayer sheets, to provide a simple opening and closing, and to 'hold the space' for people to share.

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 as an opening. A liturgy is provided for the first and final week of the LGP series.

Sharing 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, asking questions, or giving advice.

Reflecting back 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? or a word or phrase that stood out). If participants begin asking questions, offering advice or discussing, gently guide them back to the intention of simple reflection of what they noticed. Another quiet time, of a minute or so, can help group members re-centre as they prepare to hear the next person's sharing.

Closing When all have shared and have been 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.

[This video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vu6dmVOTAE&t=7s) provides a more detailed outline of what a small group process could look like. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vu6dmVOTAE&t=7s)

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

Sample Bulletin Announcement

(For Church Bulletins during January/February 2019)

Lenten Guided Prayer 2019: Sunday, March 10 – Sunday April 21 (Easter)

An opportunity to integrate prayer and scripture into daily life. This year's theme invites you to consider how God is present in the gritty or difficult places in life in order to find the grace and hope. Engage scripture readings on your own, then share from your experience in a weekly small group.

Please indicate your interest to _____ (coordinator) _____ by _____ (date) _____.

Poster (see page 6)

Sample Prayer Sheet (see page 7-8)

Prayers of Grit & Grace

Lenten Guided Prayer 2019
Sunday, March 10 to Sunday, April 21



Join with others in your congregation
by entering prayerfully into the Bible readings for Lent.

Participants engaged with Lenten Guided Prayer will have the opportunity to:

- 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 about the experience

If interested in participating, contact: _____

Sponsored by the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada

Grit and Grace

Sample Prayer Guide

For the week starting
March 10, 2019



Temptation and Redemption

Scripture: Psalm 91:1-2, 15, 16;
Luke 4:1-13; Romans 10:11

Call to Prayer:

We have times when we are filled with confidence and feeling secure and then life throws curve balls and challenges at us and we feel totally depleted and unsure how to manage. At such times it is so hard to stop, breathe and remember the words of Jesus “Worship the LORD your God, and serve only him”. Remembering these words puts things into perspective. This encouragement will push away all that detaches us from that focus which will fill us up again.

Opening Prayer: When I depend on myself alone I can soon become empty. Help me to depend on you, LORD, to fill me with all that I need to be full of your Spirit. “My God in whom I trust” (Ps. 91:2)

Meditative Reading

Come to a quiet time and place. Remove distractions and attractions and simply focus on being at peace. Take a few deep breaths. Read Luke 4:1-13. Be present in the story with Jesus. Read the scripture once more and feel the heat and be aware of your hunger and thirst. What do you think the narrative is saying to you in your life? For what do you hunger? What creates a deep thirst in you?

For Reflection

What desires are deep in you that create some distress? What would you do to quench a thirst that might make you feel guilty? How do you manage these feelings? What can you do to bring these to Jesus trusting in his unconditional love?

Additional Prayer Options

Select a prayer suggestion from the list below that grabs you, challenges you, or causes you to question. You may stay with one way of praying throughout the week or try several options.

Praying with Scripture

Read Luke 4:1-13 slowly with attention to the physical details. Read Luke again and be present with Jesus as he faces his temptations. Prayerfully ask for your temptations and seductions in your life to be revealed to you. Once you have named the temptations and placed them in your open hands turn your hands over to empty them. Release them and accept the words of consolation from Romans 10:11, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” In your confession hear in trust, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved”.

Praying through your Life

As you attend to your daily regime pay attention to those things that you consider essential in order to be fulfilled and happy. What would you consider an obstacle to being fully alive in God's love and dependent on his graciousness? What would happen if you lost your health? Your wealth? How has God been a refuge and fortress for you? (Ps.91:2)

Praying with Music

Listen to, sing or play the music that has been stirring in your heart, or choose one of the following:

Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB) #519 *Shepherd me, O God*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0kxWXHETIU>)

HWB #596 *And I will raise you up*

Sing The Story #36 *Jesus, tempted in the desert*

Praying for our World

We witness that greed, war, hunger and the distress of humanity is a scandal in a time of plenty. We see the destruction of creation and the extinction of species and feel helpless in rapidly declining climate instability. Bring all the deep needs of our humanity and creation to the God of the Universe in lament. Write your woes on strips of paper. Tear the strips into little pieces of paper that you place in a bowl filled with salted water, which represents tears. Sit in silent trust. "When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble."

(Ps. 91:15)

Closing Reflection and Prayer

As we enter the first week of Lent take some time to gather up any new insights that you have gained into your own hungers and that for which you thirst and the temptations you face. Offer a prayer of gratitude for new revelations of God's forgiveness and kindness.

Luke 4:10-11

"He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you, and on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."