

Lenten Guided Prayer 2020
***Show Us Light in the
Shadows***
Congregational Information Packet

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A ministry of Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada.

We bless and dedicate this material to the memory of Rev. Sue Clemmer Steiner, writer, storyteller and inspiration in the writing of Lenten Guided Prayer for many years.

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Welcome to Lenten Guided Prayer 2020

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 you may engage with throughout the week. 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, February 26. Online registration is available through www.commonword.ca beginning on Monday, January 6. The cost is \$20 for individuals and \$40 for groups/congregations. Once registered, you will receive a confirmation and the weekly prayer sheets will be emailed to you shortly. 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 2020 issue as a resource in preparing Lenten Guided Prayer sheets for 2020. Permission granted for use. www.leaderonline.org.

*Image by Myriam Zilles from Pixabay

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 attached.

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. More information on the Small Group Process is available at: <https://mennospiritualdirectors.weebly.com/small-group-process.html>

When Do We Begin? Lent begins with **Ash Wednesday on February 26**. 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 as a way of deepening 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 and praying with the Easter texts during Holy Week.

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 Jesus brings light into the shadow places of our lives and our world. You will be challenged to seek and to shine light, finding hope in desperate times.

Using the Weekly Prayer Guides: 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 weekly guide 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 use each one listed.* Be open to how 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.
- **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:

- a) Promote the Lenten Guided Prayer experience within your congregation
- b) Recruit group facilitators and provide them with a copy of this facilitators guide.
- c) Distribute prayer booklets to participants (or prayer sheets + 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](#) 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 2020)

Lenten Guided Prayer 2020: Sunday, March 1 – Sunday April 12 (Easter)

An opportunity to integrate prayer and scripture into daily life. This year's theme invites you to consider how Jesus brings light into the shadow places of our lives and our world. You will be challenged to seek and to shine light, finding hope in desperate times. Engage scripture readings on your own, then share from your experience in a weekly small group.

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

Poster – See following page

Show Us Light in the Shadows

Lenten Guided Prayer 2020

Sunday, March 1 to Sunday, April 12



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

Participants 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 _____

(congregational contact)

Sponsored by the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada.

*Show Us Light
in the Shadows*

Prayer Guide 1

For the week starting
March 1, 2020

Show Us Strength

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11,
Genesis 2: 15-17; 3:1-7



Invitation

We begin our Lenten reflections with a vivid picture of Jesus in the wilderness, where he fasts for 40 days. Hungry, weak, and vulnerable, he faces the tempter. 'Turn these wilderness stones into bread', 'jump from the Jerusalem temple', 'worship me,' and you will have all the power and glory this world has to offer. To the first temptation Jesus responds, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) He was able to stay true to who he was because he knew whose he was.

Opening Prayer: Become quiet. Light a candle. Notice your breathing. Say the first phrase of the breath prayer as you inhale and the second phrase as you exhale. Repeat as the Spirit leads you.

You have made us for yourself, /our hearts are restless till they rest in you. (St. Augustine)

Meditative Reading

Spend time with Matthew 4: 1-11. Write out the entire passage or an excerpt. Underline words that seem particularly important. Note the questions you have of the text and aspects of the story you've never noticed before. Feel the wilderness, the heat of day, the cold of night. Feel the hunger. Notice the strength of the temptations. Jesus quotes scripture but so does the tempter! How do you respond?

For Reflection

How are you tempted in your thoughts, in your family or in work relationships? What desires or seductions distress you? Bring these struggles to the surface. You might want to write them down. Bring your feelings and distress to God in prayer. Clench your fists as if holding the feelings and then slowly open up your hands, releasing all that you are holding into God's mercy and care. God is present with us in our wilderness trials.

Closing Prayer

Merciful God, save me from the time of trial
and deliver me from evil.

Forgive my sins and fill me with the joy and peace
of your presence and strength.

Extinguish the candle and carry God's light within you.

God will command the angels concerning you and on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. Matthew 4:6 (Old Testament words used by the tempter! Yet they are words of courage and forgiveness.)

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 the one way of praying throughout the week or try several options.

Praying with the Scriptures

Read Genesis 2: 15-17; 3:1-7. Focus on how it portrays what it is like to be human. Even in this paradise Adam and Eve feel incomplete. They grasp for more, both of them thinking the emptiness they feel inside is exactly the shape of the fruit they eat. And of course it's not. How are you tempted to fill the emptiness inside? Sit in quietness asking God to fill the holes in your heart.

Praying through your life

As a righteous Jew, Jesus fasted in preparation for the beginning of his ministry. Many Christians today, fast during Lent. Consider what distractions or attractions God may be calling you to release for this time.

Praying with Music

Listen to, sing or play the music that has been stirring in your heart, or choose songs from the list below. Dance to the music, move to it, take it along when you walk or as you drive.

STS #31 Jesus be the Center (or find on YouTube)

Refiner's Fire (find on YouTube)

STJ # 23 Slowly turning, ever turning

Praying for our World

World issues like climate change, hunger, disparity between rich and poor may make us feel hopeless. Ask God to open your eyes and heart to the places where God is active. Consider how you might become an agent of change. For example, are there ways to reduce your Carbon footprint? Talk with a friend about what you are doing and why. Jesus the one who was tempted continues to invite us to find both hope and courage in the God who named Jesus and all of us as beloved children. Pray you might discover who you are by recalling whose you are.