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## Lent: Truth and Reconciliation

In the closing months of 2009, news media gave prominent attention to the re-institution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, an initiative of Canadian aboriginal peoples and the government of Canada. This historic initiative is dedicated to seeking out and hearing the truth about a difficult chapter of Canadian history: the story of abuse in government supported and church operated Indian residential schools. The goal is to seek healing so that this will never happen again.

The season of Lent is a kind of annual Truth and Reconciliation Commission for believers. It is a time in the church year when believers are invited to be boldly truthful before God about the way things have been and the way they are. This process of truth-telling is undertaken through careful introspection, clear-eyed self-examination and humble repentance. When we reveal the whole truth about ourselves to the God who knows us, we seek out and welcome the forgiveness and reconciliation God offers to every earnest and penitent pilgrim. Only thus are we able to find healing from the wounds that sin has left on our lives and, with God's help, strive to live in the freedom of forgiveness and new beginnings.

Historically, Lent is the time in the church year when new Christians who were to be baptized submitted to a time of intensive learning, preparation, and prayer before their baptism early on Easter Sunday. This preparation took place in the context of the worshipping body of Christ, and so even as new believers were preparing for their baptism, the whole community was being called to re-examine their faith, and to thus restore and renew their own commitment to Jesus Christ.

I wonder how the body life of our Mennonite congregations would look if such a process of joint learning, reflection, and growth were to

be re-activated. What opportunities for growth might emerge in such a context of mutual truth-telling under the guidance of the Spirit? What might new and experienced Christians learn from each other in the process? What new things might God achieve in the milieu of well-worn highways of discipleship and the unmarked paths of new faith vistas?

I pray that the truth-telling journey of this Lent season will lead to a deeper comprehension of the One who is the Truth, and make possible a greater joy as we anticipate the celebration of life, hope, and redemption in Easter.

### New resources:

1. A new three-book series from Alban Institute on the power of story in leading congregations. This three-book collection brings together authors, teachers, preachers and consultants to speak to the topic of narrative leadership and the impact it can have on a congregation.

*Finding our story: narrative leadership and congregational change*

*Teaching our story: narrative leadership and pastoral formation*

*Living our story: narrative leadership and congregational culture*

Available at [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1251](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1251)

2. *Under Construction: reframing men's spirituality*. Author Gareth Brandt, teacher at Columbia Bible College, argues that warrior imagery is inadequate as a Christian metaphor for men's spirituality, especially in a time of increasing global and local violence. Drawing from the stories of Joseph, Brandt reframes spirituality for men with the peace-builder rather than the warrior as primary metaphor. Available at [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1250](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1250)