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Lent is a time of opportunity

Spanning the forty weekdays from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday before Easter, this season invites us to leave behind the “winter of our despair” and embrace “the spring of hope” (*Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities*). We Canadians are aided in this shift of spiritual moods by the change of the seasons themselves. As the dreariness of winter gives way to the harbingers of spring, so it is with our spiritual journey. As the days of Lent proceed we are carried from the depressing awareness of the many ways God’s image in us has been obscured, to the startling discovery that God is still at work in the world making things new, and is at work even in us to resurrect us from death to new life.

In the early days of the church Lent was a focused time of preparation and instruction for new Christians preparing for baptism and formal reception into the community of faith. As the receiving body, the whole congregation took advantage of this opportunity to reflect on their Christian life, and to strengthen their walk with God. This tradition lives on today as many congregations across Mennonite Church Canada give time and attention to nurturing new believers in faith exploration classes, and devote their worship to themes of self-examination and repentance in preparation for the joyful celebration of the resurrection of our Lord on Easter Sunday.

Your congregation’s worship may or may not connect with the themes of Lent, but you are most likely involved in faith instruction and baptism exploration. Let me encourage you to make an intentional link between these new believers’ exploration of faith, and an earnest search for a closer connection with God by the whole congregation. Let those who have been on the way of the cross a longer time serve as models of devotion and spiritual wisdom for those who are just beginning to find the road. Let every member of the church demonstrate that the journey of faith is ongoing; that with each new season of life there is more of God to be discovered and greater joy waiting to be revealed.

There is a rich array of resources available on the Mennonite Church Canada website to help you in this journey. For Lent seasonal resources, click on <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/seasonal/lent/>. For more resources on deepening your spiritual journey, search the Resource Centre catalogue at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/Home>.

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