



## A threshold time

Go deeper with your learning

By Bishop Greg

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Our Lenten journey continues. Now before you wonder if I missed the memo, yes, I know that traditionally, Lent is observed in February and March and that it is now mid-summer. Things are very different for us now as opposed to when the normal Lenten period occurs: COVID restrictions are gradually ebbing; provincial and international borders are opening; gatherings are permitted; and church services are resuming.

Some might argue that these days feel more like Easter than Lent. In many ways, that is true. But if we think of the Lenten season as a time for reflection and discernment, then I propose that this July and August still should be more like Lent than Easter.

Lent is a threshold time in our lives. It is a liminal space that invites us to linger, reflect, ponder and discern. There are many articles and posts written about the importance of reflecting on this time as we return to something approaching “normal.” We are advised to discern what it is we want to bring with us as we transition into a post-pandemic life. We also are to consider what it is that we need to leave behind.

In other words, what is it that we want to embrace and focus on as we move forward? What things do we set aside for the journey and what do we embrace? What attitudes, actions and practices should we leave behind that have hindered us or held us back, and that no longer seem as important or meaningful as they once did? These questions are important for us as individuals to consider. But they also are vital questions to be asked of our congregations and our ministries.

I do not believe that everything will return to normal post-COVID. Nor do I believe that everything should return to normal. After all, what have we as a church been learning during this time?

- + We have discovered that community exists in a variety of ways; that both on-line and in-person gatherings are valid but different ways of gathering.
- + We have realized just how resilient we are as congregations, communities and individuals.
- + We have focused on the needs of the most vulnerable among us, in our congregations as well as our communities.
- + We have turned our attention outside of ourselves.
- + We have willingly and selflessly refrained from complaining about public health orders that restricted in-person worship, because we knew that we were doing this for the common good.
- + We recognized that we needed to be a witness to our communities and that refraining from worshiping in person was a tangible and real way of showing love for our neighbour.
- + We have become more aware of the needs of the world and the global inequities that exist.
- + We have begun to recognize how truly complicit we are in in terms of racial injustice, the privilege of living in a wealthy country, and of vaccine nativism.

We also have learned that while there have been some financial challenges for congregations, our congregational members have continued to faithfully share their financial gifts in support of the ministry of their congregations. It really has been impressive to hear of the ongoing financial support for congregations.

So let us not be in a hurry to jump right back into things. Stay on this liminal journey a bit longer. Keep reflecting. Go deeper with your learning. Think about what it is that is life-giving and sustaining. Discern together what the Spirit might be saying to you, individually, and to you as a congregation. This threshold time is precious. Don't be so quick to leave Lent behind.