

ST. STEPHEN'S UMC – BURKE, VA
LENTEN GUIDE 2026

The Balanced Cross: Four Quadrants of Faith
A Wesleyan Discipleship Resource

Pastoral Vision for Lent 2026

Lent at St. Stephen's UMC is a season of intentional spiritual formation. Rooted in Wesleyan theology, this guide integrates preaching, Bible study, group studies and the means of grace to form disciples who live with balance, depth, and missional purpose.

Lent is a sacred season of spiritual formation in which followers of Jesus intentionally return to God. In the Wesleyan tradition, Lent is not merely a season of self-denial but a journey of grace in which God forms us through Scripture, prayer, fasting, worship, silence, solitude, and acts of mercy and justice. This guide integrates preaching, Bible study, and spiritual practices to help believers grow in holiness of heart and life.

Wesleyan Theology of Formation

John Wesley taught that God transforms believers through the means of grace: works of piety and works of mercy. Holiness of heart and holiness of life are inseparable. Spiritual gifts flourish when shaped by disciplined practices.

Definition and Purpose of Lent

Definition: Lent is a forty-day season of repentance, renewal, and discipleship, preparing believers for the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Purposes of Lent:

- Deepen love for God and neighbor
- Practice the means of grace

- Discern and steward spiritual gifts
- Cultivate holiness of heart and life
- Prepare for Easter through repentance and renewal

The Balanced Cross Model

- Inward Formation (Prayer, Scripture, Silence, Solitude)
- Outward Mission (Mercy, Justice, Service)
- Personal Faith (Private devotion and character)
- Communal Faith (Worship, Sacraments, Fellowship)

The Wesleyan Means of Grace

Works of Piety: prayer, Scripture, fasting, worship, Christian conferencing, silence, solitude.

Works of Mercy: compassion, generosity, justice, advocacy, reconciliation.

Weekly Journey Through Lent for Group Bible Study

Week 1 – From Burnout to Balance

Scripture: Mark 12:30–31

Focus: Alignment of gifts and grace.

Practices: Sabbath, self-examination, silence.

Week 2 – The Secret Life

Scripture: Matthew 6:6

Focus: Hidden formation.

Practices: prayer, Scripture, solitude.

Week 3 – Together We're Better

Scripture: Hebrews 10:23–25

Focus: Community and worship.
Practices: public worship, fellowship.

Week 4 – Feed Your Soul

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:7–8

Focus: disciplined growth.
Practices: fasting, spiritual reading.

Week 5 – Compassion Fatigue to Compassionate Action

Scripture: James 2:15–17

Focus: mercy.
Practices: acts of service and generosity.

Week 6 – Acts of Justice

Scripture: Micah 6:6–8

Focus: justice.
Practices: advocacy and covenant commitment.

Daily Devotional Rhythm

Each day of Lent, follow this rhythm: Scripture → Silence → Prayer → Journal.

For those who are prayer walking they can pray and walk together

For those who are practicing solitude, silence or meditation disciplines

Scripture → Silence, meditation → Prayer → Journal.

Sample daily prayer: 'Lord, shape my heart and guide my steps. Amen.'

Daily Scripture Guide for Lent 2026

Prayer Walk, Personal Devotion, and Scriptures for Practicing Silence and Solitude

Lenten 2026 Daily Scripture Readings

Ash Wednesday – Return to God

Feb 18 – Isaiah 1:16–18

Week 1 – Personal Formation (Holiness of Heart)

Feb 19 – Psalm 139:23–24

Feb 20 – Jeremiah 24:7

Feb 21 – Ezekiel 36:26–27

Feb 22 – Romans 12:1–2

Feb 23 – 2 Corinthians 5:17

Feb 24 – Proverbs 4:23

Theme: inner renewal, alignment, transformation

Week 2 – Deepening Devotion (Prayer, Silence, Solitude)

Feb 25 – Psalm 46:10

Feb 26 – Isaiah 30:15

Feb 27 – Luke 5:15–16

Feb 28 – Colossians 3:1–3

Mar 1 – Psalm 119:105

Mar 2 – John 15:4–7

Mar 3 – Philippians 4:6–7

Theme: intimacy with God, stillness, dependence

Week 3 – Communal Formation (Belonging & Worship)

Mar 4 – Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

Mar 5 – Romans 15:5–7

Mar 6 – 1 Corinthians 12:12–14

Mar 7 – Ephesians 2:19–22

Mar 8 – Colossians 3:15–16

Mar 9 – Psalm 133:1

Mar 10 – John 17:20–23

Theme: community, unity, worship, belonging

Week 4 – Spiritual Discipline & Growth

Mar 11 – Hebrews 12:11

Mar 12 – Proverbs 16:3

Mar 13 – 2 Timothy 1:6–7

Mar 14 – Galatians 5:22–23

Mar 15 – Psalm 92:12–15

Mar 16 – James 1:2–4

Mar 17 – 1 Peter 2:2

Theme: training, endurance, maturity

Week 5 – Compassion (Personal Works of Mercy)

Mar 18 – Proverbs 19:17
Mar 19 – Matthew 25:34–36
Mar 20 – Romans 12:13
Mar 21 – Colossians 4:6
Mar 22 – 1 John 3:16–18
Mar 23 – Luke 6:35–36
Mar 24 – Psalm 82:3–4
Theme: mercy, generosity, kindness

Holy Week – Justice, Sacrifice, and Hope

Mar 25 – Zechariah 7:9–10
Mar 26 – Jeremiah 22:3
Mar 27 – Amos 5:14–15
Mar 28 – Matthew 20:26–28
Mar 29 – John 13:34–35
Mar 30 – Philippians 2:5–8
Mar 31 – Isaiah 53:10–12

Holy Thursday
April 2 – Luke 22:14–20

Good Friday
April 3 – Romans 8:10–11

Core Spiritual Disciplines

Prayer

Prayer is the intentional practice of opening our hearts to God through listening, speaking, and intercession, allowing the Holy Spirit to deepen our relationship with God and align our lives with God's will.

Scripture

Scripture is the intentional practice of engaging God's Word with attentiveness and humility, allowing the Spirit to shape our understanding, transform our character, and guide our faith and action.

Journaling

Journaling is the intentional practice of reflecting in writing on Scripture, prayer, and daily experiences, helping us discern God's presence and trace the transforming work of grace in our lives.

Daily Prompts

- What did I notice in Scripture today?
- What is God forming in me?
- Where did I sense grace today?
- How will I respond in faith?

Fasting

Fasting is the intentional practice of abstaining from food or other comforts in order to deepen dependence on God, reorder our desires, and heighten spiritual awareness of God's presence and purpose.

Meditation

Meditation is the intentional practice of slowing down to prayerfully ponder Scripture and God's presence, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape our thoughts, desires, and actions in alignment with Christ.

Silence

Silence is the intentional practice of quieting external noise and internal distractions in order to listen attentively for God's voice and rest in God's presence.

Solitude

Solitude is the intentional practice of withdrawing from activity and social demands to be alone with God, creating space for deeper self-awareness, prayer, and spiritual renewal.

Worship (Private & Public)

Worship is the intentional practice of responding to God's presence through praise, prayer, Scripture, and sacrament—both personally and communally—so that our identity and mission are shaped by God's grace.

Prayer Walking

Prayer walking is the intentional practice of moving through neighborhoods and communities with prayerful awareness, interceding for people and places while discerning how God is calling us to participate in God's work in the world. Join our [Pacers Prayer Walkers](#)

St. Stephen's Lenten Covenant

- One discipline of devotion
- One discipline of restraint
- One discipline of compassion
- One discipline of justice

Wesleyan Sending

As we journey through Lent, may God form us into disciples who embody holiness of heart and life. May our gifts and disciplines grow together, shaping us for faithful service in Burke, VA and beyond.