

ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Lent 2026

Learning to Live Inside Out

A Lenten Devotional Journey

Ash Wednesday through Easter

"Create in me a clean heart, O God." – Psalm 51:10

A Word from Pastor Debbie

Beloved St. Paul Family,

Lent is not about self-improvement. It is about returning.

Returning to the One who formed us from dust. Returning to the One who breathes life into dry places. Returning to the heart of Christ.

This year, I invite you to walk through Lent as a season of inside-out transformation. Not surface religion. Not performance. But heart work.

May these reflections guide you gently toward surrender, clarity, and resurrection life.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Debbie

Ash Wednesday – Remember You Are Dust

Scripture: Joel 2:12-13

Ashes remind us that we are dust—but beloved dust. Formed by God's own hands. Lent begins not with shame, but with invitation.

The prophet Joel says, “Rend your heart, not your garments.” God is not interested in religious performance. God is interested in your heart. This season is about returning—returning to the One who shapes us, breathes into us, and restores what has grown cold.

Inside-out faith begins with honesty. Where have we drifted? What have we substituted for intimacy with God?

Practice: Spend five minutes each day in silence praying, "Lord, show me what needs to return to You."

Journal

Week 1 – From Wilderness to Dependence

Scripture: Matthew 4:1–4

Jesus begins his ministry in the wilderness. No applause. No crowds. No comfort. Just hunger, temptation, and truth.

The wilderness strips away illusions. It reveals what we rely on. What we think we cannot live without.

Lent is our wilderness season. It shows us where our trust truly rests. Jesus teaches us that we do not live by bread alone—but by trust in God.

Practice: Fast from one small comfort this week and turn that moment into prayer.

Journal

Week 2 – Pruned to Bear Fruit

Scripture: John 15:1–2

Pruning is not punishment. It is preparation.

When a vine is pruned, it looks smaller—barer—less impressive. But the gardener knows something the vine does not: cutting back now leads to growth later.

Sometimes Lent feels like loss. But what if God is shaping you for deeper fruitfulness?

Practice: Ask God what may be draining energy but bearing no fruit.

Journal

Week 3 – Living Water for Thirsty Souls

Scripture: John 4:13–14

We are thirsty people. We thirst for validation, peace, control, security.

And we keep going back to wells that cannot satisfy.

Jesus offers living water—not a temporary fix—but a spring from within.

Lent asks us: Where are you drawing water?

Practice: Notice what you instinctively turn to when stressed. Replace it once with prayer.

Journal

Week 4 – From Blindness to Sight

Scripture: John 9:1-7

Sometimes we do not know we are blind. We grow accustomed to distorted vision—resentments, assumptions, old narratives.

Jesus does not just open eyes. He changes perspective.

Lent is a season of holy clarity.

Practice: Before difficult conversations, pray, "Lord, help me see as You see."

Journal

Week 5 – Dying Before We Die

Scripture: John 12:24

A seed must fall into the ground and die to bear fruit.

There are parts of us that must die—ego, fear, control—so resurrection life can take root.

Surrender is not losing. It is planting.

Practice: Write down one fear and release it to God.

Journal

Holy Week – Love Poured Out

Scripture: Philippians 2:5–8

Jesus does not cling to power. He empties himself.

On the cross, love is poured out—not forced, not coerced—but given.

The cross is not just something we believe in. It is a pattern we follow.

Practice: Perform one hidden act of kindness.

Journal

Easter – Resurrection from the Inside Out

Scripture: John 20:1–18

Resurrection begins quietly—in a garden, in tears, in confusion.

Then Jesus speaks a name.

Resurrection is personal. Transformational.

What God began in Lent bursts into new life.

Practice: Share one way God has changed you this season.

Journal

A Prayer for the Journey

Lord Jesus,
Shape my heart.
Prune what hinders love.
Quench my thirst.
Open my eyes.
Teach me surrender.
Lead me into resurrection life—from the inside out.

Amen.