

Lent 1

Let go of idols, make room for God

Week before Sunday 22 February 2026

This week's theme is about idols – not statues, but the subtle things we trust more than God: success, image, control, comfort. They're like fake plants: they look alive, but they're not real. Lent invites us to walk with Christ on the way of the Cross, to notice those false promises and gently let them go. What would it feel like to live with less pressure to perform, less fear of failure, less of a need to control? What might grow in that space? This is the beginning of a journey towards what is real, rooted and alive.



Bible

Read Matthew 4:1–11 and this summary:

Jesus is led into the wilderness, where he faces three temptations: to satisfy hunger, to test God's protection and to seize power. Each time he chooses trust in God over self-reliance or spectacle. This passage invites us to name the things we're tempted to rely on instead of God – and to let them go. Lent begins with a call to travel lightly and to trust deeply.

Questions for discussion:

1. What 'idols' can you think of – visible or hidden – that we are tempted to trust more than God (eg success, control, approval, comfort)?
2. How do the temptations Jesus faced mirror the pressures we experience in our own lives?
3. What helps you stay grounded in God's truth when you feel tested or tempted?

Spiritual practice

Explain that each week during Lent, we'll offer a simple spiritual practice to try out between sessions. They are designed to help people explore the week's theme in their everyday lives, through reflection, creativity or small acts of attention. You don't need to do them perfectly or every day. Just give them a go, and see what you notice.

Next week, we'll reflect on how it went: what surprised you, challenged you, or helped you connect with God in a new way.

'True and false' journal

Keep a small notebook or notes app where you record two things each day:

- One false message you noticed (eg 'I have to be perfect to be loved').
- One true message from God (eg 'You are my beloved').

End each entry in your journal with a short prayer:

"God, help me let go of the false and hold fast to what is true."

Why it helps:

This practice helps us discern the difference between the world's messages and God's voice. It trains us to reject the idols of performance, perfectionism and fear, and embrace our true selves in God.

Pray

*God of the wilderness,
as we begin this journey of Lent, help us to travel lightly.
Strip away what distracts us, and draw us closer to your heart.
May we find you not only in comfort, but in quiet and simplicity.
Amen.*

Lent 1

Lent 2

Let go of form, embrace the spirit

Week before Sunday 1 March 2026

Faith can sometimes feel like a checklist: rules to follow, routines to keep, boxes to tick. We may cling to what feels safe and predictable. But Jesus reminds us that the Spirit moves freely, like the wind; unseen yet powerful, surprising and alive. Lent invites us to loosen our grip on what feels fixed and open ourselves to mystery and transformation.

Abram left everything familiar to follow God's call. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, searching for answers. Both discovered that life with God isn't about rigid forms – it's about trust, openness and the Spirit. What would it look like to let go of the need for certainty and allow God to surprise you this week? Where might the Spirit be nudging you towards something new?

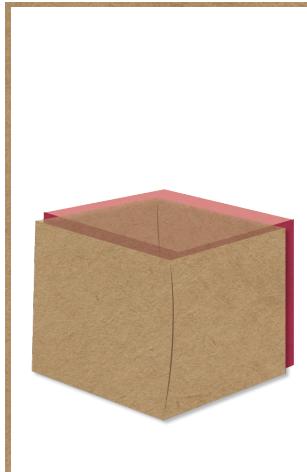
Bible

Read John 3:1–17 and this summary:

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, full of questions. Jesus speaks of being born from above – not physically, but spiritually – through the movement of the Spirit. This passage invites us to loosen our grip on certainty and control and to be open to the mystery of God's transforming presence.

Questions for discussion:

1. Where in your faith life do you feel stuck in 'form' – going through the motions without sensing the Spirit?
2. What does it mean to trust the wind of the Spirit – to be open to movement, mystery and surprise?
3. Why do you think Nicodemus went to see Jesus at night? Could the timing have a deeper meaning?



Spiritual practice

Before we introduce this week's practice, take a moment to reflect on last week's. You were invited to keep a 'true and false' journal. What did you notice as you tried it out? Was anything surprising, challenging or encouraging?

Openness to the unexpected

This week, set aside time each day to be open to unexpected moments.

- Begin with a moment of quiet openness. You might say: "Spirit of life, move freely. Help me notice what matters." Or simply pause, breathe and invite a sense of awareness and presence.
- Whether you're at home, at work, online, or in conversation, stay attentive to surprising encounters: a message, a moment of beauty, a person who crosses your path. Let go of control and allow the Spirit to guide your attention.

Why it helps:

This practice mirrors Jesus' invitation to Nicodemus: stepping into mystery, trusting the Spirit's movement, and embracing the possibility of surprise. It helps us loosen our grip on structure and become more attentive to the Spirit's presence in the everyday.

Pray

*Spirit of life,
you move where you will – unseen, unexpected and free.
Help us to loosen our grip on what is fixed and familiar,
and open ourselves to your breath of transformation.
May we be light, open and ready to be moved by you.
Amen.*

Lent 2

Lent 3

Let go of scarcity, embrace abundance

Week before Sunday 8 March 2026

Scarcity whispers: "There's not enough." Not enough time, money, energy, love. Many of us live with pressures shaped by the way our world is organised. But this week, Jesus offers living water: a source that never runs dry. Lent invites us to shift our thinking from fear to trust, from scarcity to abundance. This isn't about ignoring reality; it's about seeing with new eyes the generosity of God that surrounds us.

God's grace is overflowing. It's not about having more; it is about being filled with life and sharing it freely. What would change if you believed there was enough – enough love, enough hope, enough grace for you and for others? How might that belief shape your choices, your relationships, your outlook?

Bible

Read John 4:5–42 and this summary:

Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well and offers her "living water" – a source of life that never runs dry. Her encounter with Jesus transforms her and she becomes a witness to his grace. This passage invites us to move from scarcity to abundance, trusting that God's love is overflowing and available to all.

Questions for discussion:

1. Where in your life do you feel stuck in a mindset of 'scarcity' – emotionally, spiritually or practically?
2. How does Jesus' offer of "living water" challenge the idea that we must work hard to earn God's presence or grace?
3. How might you, like the woman at the well, leave behind something that once defined you and step into a new identity rooted in abundance?



Spiritual practice

Last week, you were invited to stay open to unexpected moments and signs of the Spirit. What did you notice? Were there any surprises or shifts in perspective?

Spring photos

This week, take time each day to go outside – even just for a few minutes.

- Look for signs of spring: daffodils, buds on trees, lambs in the fields, birds, or longer daylight hours.
- Take a photo of something that catches your attention as a sign of life and abundance.
- At the end of the week, look back over your photos. What do they reveal about God's generosity? What surprised you? What lifted your spirit?

Why it helps:

This practice helps shift our focus from what feels lacking to what is already growing. Spring is a natural metaphor for abundance. It's not flashy or excessive, but quiet, steady and full of promise. By paying attention to the world around us, we train our hearts to notice God's provision and presence, even in small things.

Pray

*God of overflowing grace,
thank you for the gifts that surround us.
Help us to see beyond what we lack, and trust in your generous love.
May we live with open hands and grateful hearts.
Amen.*

Lent 3

Lent 4

Let go of appearances, and embrace what's inside

Week before Sunday 15 March 2026

We live in a world obsessed with appearances: status, image, success. We may make quick judgements based on what we see, often missing the deeper truth. But God sees the heart. This week, Lent invites us to look deeper: to notice dignity in others and in ourselves, to see beyond the surface and recognise the image of God within.

Jesus saw a man born blind not as a sinner to blame but as someone through whom God's works would shine. Samuel learnt that God's choice of king wasn't about outward appearances, but about the heart.

What would it mean for you to see others – and yourself – with that kind of grace? How might it change the way you speak, act and relate to others?



Bible

Read John 9:1–41 and this summary:

Jesus heals a man born blind, challenging assumptions about sin and worthiness. As the man's sight is restored, his spiritual insight grows too, while others remain stuck in judgement. This passage invites us to see with compassion, and to recognise the dignity in every person, including ourselves.

Questions for discussion:

1. Where in our lives are we tempted to judge others by outward appearance – status, behaviour, background – rather than looking for the image of God within them?
2. How does Jesus' response to the man born blind challenge our assumptions about who is 'worthy' or 'holy'?
3. When have you felt overlooked, dismissed or misunderstood and what helped you feel truly seen and valued? How might that experience shape the way you recognise dignity in others?

Spiritual practice

Last week's practice was to look for signs of spring and abundance. What caught your attention? Did anything shift in how you saw God's generosity?

Dignity spotting

Spend time each day noticing and affirming the dignity of someone you might usually overlook, or be judgemental towards. For example, you could:

- Have a brief conversation with someone you usually pass by.
- Write a note of encouragement or thanks to someone whose work is often unseen.
- Spend a moment in silent prayer for someone you find difficult to understand.

Why it helps:

This practice gently retrains our attention. It moves us from surface-level judgements to deeper recognition of the image of God in others. It invites us to 'see with the heart', as God does.

Pray

*God who sees the heart,
teach us to look with compassion, not assumption.
Help us to honour the dignity in every person, including ourselves.
May we be people of grace, welcome and understanding.
Amen.*

Lent 4

Lent 5

Let go of despair, embrace 'respair'

Week before Sunday 22 March 2026

Have you ever heard the word respair? It means "fresh hope after despair". It's a word we need. Life can feel heavy, broken and stuck. We wonder if things will ever change. But this week, Lent invites us to believe that restoration is possible, even when hope feels lost.

Ezekiel saw dry bones come to life. Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb. What would it look like to trust that God is at work, even in the places that seem beyond repair? Where might God be breathing life into communities whose hope has long been denied?



Bible

Read John 11:1–45 and this summary:

Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus has died. He weeps with those who mourn, and then calls Lazarus out of the tomb. Life returns where death seemed final. This passage invites us to trust that God is still breathing life into what feels broken or lost – and to hold onto hope, even in despair.

Questions for discussion:

1. Where in your life or community do you feel like you're standing in a valley of dry bones: places that feel lifeless, stuck or forgotten?
2. When have you experienced a sense of 'respair' or hope returning after a time of despair? What helped you recognise it?
3. What does it mean to 'speak life' – to be someone who helps others breathe again, hope again, live again?

Spiritual practice

Last week, you were invited to affirm the dignity of someone you might usually overlook. What did that experience stir in you? Did it change how you saw others – or yourself?

The 'respair shop'

This week, embrace your inner Bagpuss!

- Choose one thing that's broken, messy or neglected: a torn item of clothing, a cluttered drawer, a squeaky hinge, a forgotten corner of your home.
- Take time to fix it, clean it, or bring it back to life. As you do, reflect on these questions: What in me might also need repair? What hope could be restored through this act?
- You don't need to do it perfectly. The point is care, attention and the belief that restoration is possible – even in small things.

Why it helps:

This practice gently retrains our attention. It moves us from surface-level judgements to deeper recognition of the image of God in others. It invites us to 'see with the heart', as God does.

Pray

*God of restoration,
breathe life into what feels broken or forgotten.
Help us to trust in your power to renew and revive.
May hope rise again in us, fresh and fierce.
Amen.*

Lent 5

Palm Sunday

Let go of violence, embrace gentleness

Week before Sunday 29 March 2026

Palm Sunday (29 March 2026) is a tale of two processions. Pilate rides in with soldiers and weapons. Jesus enters on a donkey – gentle, vulnerable, unarmed. His power is rooted in love, not force. This is a radical vision of leadership: strength expressed through humility, authority shaped by compassion.

This week, Lent invites us to choose gentleness in a world that often prizes control. Gentleness isn't weakness – it's power reimagined, strength that dismantles rather than reinforces harmful systems.

Where could you practice that kind of strength this week? How might gentleness transform a conversation, a relationship, a community?

Bible

Read Matthew 21:1–11 and this summary:

Jesus enters Jerusalem riding a donkey, fulfilling prophecy and offering a vision of peace. The crowd shouts "Hosanna!" It means 'save us we pray' and is a cry for salvation, not conquest. This passage invites us to let go of power and control and to follow Jesus in the way of gentleness, humility and love.

Questions for discussion:

1. How does Jesus' choice to enter Jerusalem on a donkey challenge our assumptions about leadership and power?
2. What does gentleness look like in your life, and where is it hardest to practise?
3. What do you most want to be saved from in your life right now?



Spiritual practice

Last week's practice was the 'respair shop' – restoring something broken or neglected. What did you choose to repair, and what does it say about your own journey of hope?

Teddy bear 24/7

This week, carry something soft with you wherever you go: a teddy bear, or a piece of fabric. Let it be a physical reminder to choose gentleness in your interactions. When you feel stressed, rushed, or tempted to react sharply, touch the object and pause. Ask: "How can I respond with gentleness, like Jesus did?"

Why it helps:

Doing something like this engages our senses and helps us stay grounded. Carrying something soft is a gentle nudge towards compassion, patience and peace – especially in moments when we feel pulled towards control or frustration.

Pray

*Gentle Jesus,
you entered the city not with force, but with love.
Teach us to lead with compassion, to speak with kindness,
and to choose peace even when the world demands power.
May our hearts be soft and strong, like yours.
Amen.*

Palm Sunday

Holy Week

Let go of fear, embrace joy

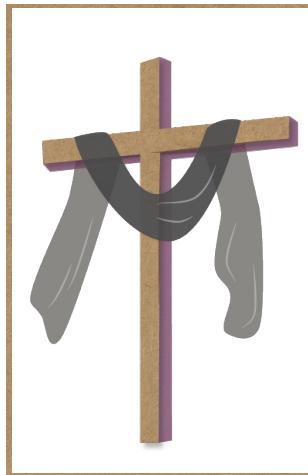
Week before Sunday 5 April 2026

Spiritual practice

Last week, you were invited to carry something soft as a reminder 'to choose gentleness'. Did carrying softness help you act with kindness? How did that practice shape your interactions or responses?

Holy Week journal

Each day of Holy Week, take a few minutes to read a section from Matthew's Gospel. And then think back to the different spiritual practices that you have explored in this Lent series.



Monday

Matthew 21:12–16

Jesus disrupts the Temple, making space for something deeper.

Think back to week two's practice of noticing unexpected moments and signs of the Holy Spirit. Imagine you were following this discipline and happened to be present in the Temple when Jesus entered and turned over the tables. Do you think you would see his disruptive action as a surprising work of God, challenging the established fixed form of religion and opening the way to something different?

Tuesday

Matthew 21:18–22

Jesus curses the barren fig tree and speaks of faith that bears fruit.

Think back to week three's practice of noticing signs of spring and abundance. Imagine you were following this discipline and walked past the fig tree just before Jesus arrived. Would you have seen its barrenness as a warning against scarcity thinking? How might Jesus' words challenge you to trust in unseen abundance from God, even when things look lifeless?

Wednesday

Matthew 26:14–16

Judas makes a decision for which others will judge him.

What led him there? Think back to week four's practice of affirming dignity in those we might overlook or misjudge. Imagine you were present when Judas approached the chief priests. Would you have seen only betrayal, or would you have wondered what pain or confusion led him there? How does this moment invite you to look deeper before judging?

Thursday

Matthew 26:26–30

Jesus shares bread and wine, offering hope in the face of betrayal.

Think back to week five's 'respair shop' practice – repairing something broken or neglected. Imagine you were at the table with Jesus, holding a cup in your hands. Would you have seen this meal as a quiet act of restoration? What does this moment have to say about the possibility of hope even when things feel fragile?

Friday

Matthew 27:27–31

Jesus endures cruelty without retaliation.

Think back to the Palm Sunday practice of carrying something soft – a teddy bear or piece of fabric. Imagine you were in the crowd, holding that object as Jesus was mocked and beaten. How might holding that symbol of gentleness and kindness feel at that moment?

Saturday

Matthew 27:57–61

Jesus' body is laid in the tomb. Silence and waiting begin.

Think back to week one's 'true and false' journal practice. Imagine you were one of the women watching the tomb being sealed. What false messages might have crept in about endings, failure or absence? What truths might still be waiting to rise, quietly, in the silence?

Holy Week

Bible

Read Matthew 26:17–30 and this summary:

Jesus shares a final meal with his disciples. He blesses the bread and wine, speaks of betrayal, and offers words of covenant and hope. Even as sorrow and uncertainty gather, he chooses to be present, generous and faithful.

This passage invites us to stay with the mixed feelings of Holy Week – to make space for grief, trust and quiet hope all at once. It means not rushing past the hard parts, but holding them alongside the promise of love. As we break bread together, we remember that love is still at work, even when life feels uncertain or shadowed.

Questions for discussion:

1. What stands out to you about Jesus' presence at the table, knowing what's about to happen?
2. How does his choice to share a meal – including with someone who will betray him – shape your understanding of grace and community?
3. The disciples respond with sorrow and confusion. Have you ever experienced a moment where love and loss were closely intertwined? What helped you keep going without shutting down or running away from those feelings?

Pray

Jesus,
you shared bread with your friends, even as shadows gathered.
In this week of waiting and wondering,
help us to trust that love is still at work.
As we break bread together,
may we remember your presence in sorrow and in silence,
and hold onto the promise that joy will come.
Amen.



The Methodist Church 

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