

LEARNING TO STAY



A Season Overview for Local Church Leaders

Dedication Lent 2026

This resource is dedicated to Christ's community—
to those who choose presence when leaving would be easier.

May God strengthen all who are learning to stay together:
to stay with truth when it unsettles,
to stay with one another when community strains,
to stay with suffering without turning away,
and to stay with love all the way to the cross.

May this season form communities shaped not by urgency or performance,
but by courage, compassion, and faithfulness.

May Christ meet us where we choose to remain.
May the Spirit sustain us when the way is unclear.
And may God hold us—together—until life is made new.

Much love in Christ,
Matt

These Lenten Resources are made by Rev. Matthew J. Skolnik.
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What This Lent Is About

Lent 2026 is shaped around a simple, demanding practice: learning to stay.

In a world that trains us to move quickly—away from discomfort, from conflict, from grief, from uncertainty—this season invites churches to practice something countercultural and deeply faithful: remaining present.

To stay with Christ.

To stay with one another.

To stay with truth.

*To stay with love, even when the way
forward is unclear.*

This Lent is not about fixing what is broken or resolving every question. It is about forming communities that can remain faithful, attentive, and compassionate in the middle of unfinished stories.

We know that Jesus practices staying, when he “set his face towards Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51).



Why “Learning to Stay” Now

The context of 2026 matters.

Many people are exhausted—not only by global events, politics, and economic uncertainty, but by the constant pressure to react, perform, and decide quickly. Technology has made leaving easy—and staying harder—especially when it comes to sustaining attention, relationships, and shared meaning. Polarization has made staying feel risky. Declining institutions have made endurance feel pointless.

Within the church, leaders and congregations alike are carrying fatigue:

- fatigue from managing conflict,
- fatigue from trying to be relevant,
- fatigue from feeling responsible for outcomes they cannot control.

“Learning to Stay” does not ask people to try harder. It asks them to practice holy presence together.

This overview is written to help leaders frame the season for their communities—not to prescribe how it must be practiced.



What Kind of Participation This Lent Invites

This season emphasizes formation over productivity.

Churches are invited to:

- value consistency over novelty,
- allow silence without rushing to fill it,
- resist premature Easter language,
- and honor emotional honesty as faithfulness.

Participation does not require eloquence, certainty, or consensus. Listening counts. Waiting counts. Showing up counts.

For some, practicing the art of staying will feel grounding.
For others, it will feel uncomfortable or even unsettling.



What This Lent Is Not Asking

This Lent is not asking churches to:

- do more programming,
- manufacture emotional experiences,
- solve theological tensions,
- or present faith as a set of clear answers.

It is not a performance season.

It is not a self-improvement plan.

It is not a test of institutional strength.

This season trusts that faithfulness often looks like remaining actively engaged, not achieving. The invitation isn't to build but to be present. To leave the work unfinished, trusting that God is present and at work even when outcomes are unresolved.

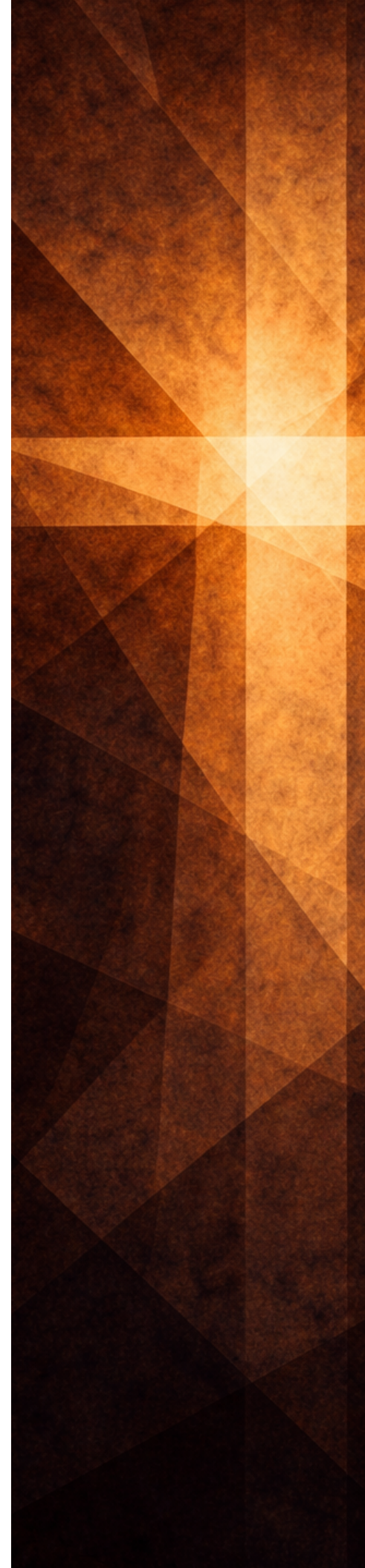
The Arc of the Season

From Ash Wednesday through Holy Friday and Dark Saturday, the season follows a deliberate progression:

- staying with truth,
- staying when escape is tempting,
- staying with unanswered questions,
- staying when community strains,
- staying with grief and delay,
- staying when approval disappears,
- staying at the cross,
- and finally, staying in silence.

Intensity increases over time—not to overwhelm, but to prepare hearts honestly for Easter without rushing toward it.

Holy Saturday is held intentionally without resolution. Silence is not treated as absence, but as faithful waiting.



How to Measure “Success” This Lent

Success this season is not measured by attendance, enthusiasm, or clarity.

Instead, consider these questions:

Did we create space for people to remain present with Christ and one another?

Did we resist the urge to rush toward answers?

Did we honor grief, doubt, and silence without fixing them?

Did we practice staying—with God and with one another?

If people leave this Lent more attentive, more compassionate, more patient with themselves and others, then the season has done its work—forming people who are more attentive, compassionate, and patient with themselves and others as the rest in God’s grace.

A Word to Leaders

You do not need to carry this season alone.

This resource is designed to be adapted freely. Some weeks may feel thin. Some gatherings may feel quiet. That does not mean nothing is happening.

Formation often looks like steadiness, not momentum.

Trust the pace.

Trust the silence.

Trust that God is present even when outcomes are unclear.

If you would like to talk through how to use these resources in your context, connect with another trusted local leader, or simply ask questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Matt.

Above all, remember: you are also learning to stay.