



SUMC Newsletter

Sunnyvale United Methodist Church

535 Old San Francisco Rd, Sunnyvale, CA 94086



March 2026

Lent 2026

Since February 22, SUMC is offering a six-week **Lenten study** based on Rachel Billups, *An Unlikely Lent*. Together we will explore how God often shows up in unexpected places and moments and what that means for us in our faith journey. Every week the sermon and Lenten series will focus on a different theme:

Week 1-Theme: Unlikely Offering

Mary of Bethany

Week 2-Theme: Unlikely Opposition

The Servant Girl

Week 3-Theme: Unlikely Freedom

Barabbas

Week 4-Theme: Unlikely Companionship

Simon of Cyrene

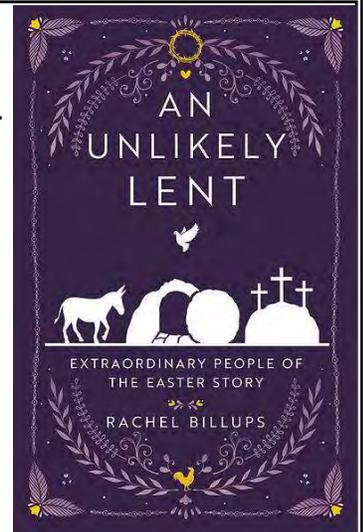
Week 5-Theme: Unlikely Courage

The Women at the Cross

Week 6-Theme: Unlikely Allies

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus

Lenten study will primarily be done in small groups, but anyone who is not part of a small group and would like to participate is welcome to join any of the groups on the days and times listed: Sunday @ 11:30 AM, and Wednesday @ 1:00 PM. All are welcome as we walk this sacred journey together.




LENT 2026 PHOTO-A-DAY CHALLENGE

EACH DAY DURING LENT OFFERS A WORD OF THE DAY. WE INVITE YOU TO PAUSE, REFLECT AND POST A RESPONSE ON YOUR PLATFORM OF CHOICE TAGGED WITH #LENTPHOTOADAY. YOUR POST SHOULD ILLUSTRATE HOW YOU PERCEIVE EACH WORD OF THE DAY. NO EXPLANATION NEEDED. YOU CAN SHARE A PHOTO, POEM, VIDEO OR EVEN A SIMPLE THOUGHT.

FEBRUARY

18 - CONSUME
19 - WILDERNESS
20 - TEST
21 - WORSHIP
22 - CELEBRATE
23 - SHONE
24 - DAZZLING
25 - BELOVED
26 - OVERCOME
27 - ALONE
28 - VISION

MARCH

1 - CELEBRATE
2 - DEEP
3 - SPRING
4 - HARVEST
5 - COMPLETE
6 - SOWS
7 - BELIEVED
8 - CELEBRATE
9 - REVEALED
10 - WORKS
11 - OPENED
12 - ASTONISHING
13 - SEE
14 - REMAINS
15 - CELEBRATE
16 - MESSAGE
17 - LOVE
18 - CONSOLE
19 - GIVE
20 - LIVE

APRIL

1 - LOOKING
2 - HOLD
3 - CARRIED
4 - ANNOUNCED
EASTER
5 - CELEBRATE



Pope Leo XIV's message for Lent 2026 emphasizes the importance of fasting and listening as a time for conversion and renewal. The Pope invites everyone to place the mystery of God at the center of their lives, allowing the word of God to touch their hearts and renew their commitment to following Christ. He encourages fasting as a concrete way to prepare for receiving God's word and to govern their desires towards God and good deeds. The message also calls for abstaining from harsh words and rash judgement, urging instead to cultivate kindness and respect in all aspects of life.

Notes from the Associate Pastor

Pastor Bayani Alkuino



As of this writing, it has been raining for several days—cold, grey, and wet. On mornings like these, it's tempting

to stay curled up in bed a little longer. Yet we know that March is just around the corner, bringing brighter skies and sunnier days—days that invite us to step outside, jog in the park, let children play on the playground, and reconnect with one another.

In a similar way, our church is stepping into a meaningful season of reflection through the book **An Unlikely Lent** by **Rachel Billups**. From the very first pages, I was immediately drawn in by her perspective. Often, when we read Scripture, we

focus on the main characters—the heroes of faith—while overlooking the many unnamed, unnoticed people around them. Yet God frequently works through those on the sidelines to accomplish His purposes.

Rachel Billups invites us to slow down and reflect on these forgotten figures in the Bible—the ones who rarely get the spotlight, but whose presence still matters deeply in God's story. Many of us can relate to standing in those quieter places, faithfully present but often unseen. As Scripture reminds us, *"The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone."* (Psalm 118:22), and *"What the world thinks is worthless, useless, and nothing at all is what God has used*

to destroy what the world considers important." (1 Corinthians 1:28).

This short and accessible book can be read in a single sitting, yet it opens the door to rich reflection throughout the Lenten season. My hope is that it will encourage us to come out of our routines, connect more deeply with one another, and rediscover God's grace through the eyes of those in the Bible who may stand exactly where many of us stand today.

Let us remember: *God often does His greatest work through the people we least expect—including those quietly standing on the sidelines.*

God bless everyone!
Pastor Bayani Alkuino

Vacation Bible School



Join us for a fun and exciting week of:

- Bible Stories
- Music & Singing
- Crafts
- Experiments
- Games
- Story Time
- Snacks/Lunch
- Friendship & Faith

DATE: June 15 - 19

TIME: 9:00am - 5:00pm

AGE: 5 - 13 years

WHERE: Sunnyvale United Methodist Church,
535 Old San Francisco Road, Sunnyvale94086

**FIND
YOUR
STRENGTH
IN GOD**

Observing Lent

There is no one prescribed way to observe Lent. Instead we are each encouraged to find our own method of confronting our sinfulness, remembering our mortality, and giving thanks for the gift of salvation we receive through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Fasting

One of the more common practices is to give something up for Lent. Some abstain from chocolate, social media, shopping, or something else through the season. This is a religious practice known as fasting. We fast to reorient ourselves away from the distraction of those things, and back toward God.

Another way to reorient your life toward God, is to focus on devotional practices like Bible study and prayer during the season.

Bible reading

Many do not know where to begin when reading the Bible. The Upper Room Daily Devotional Guide and Alive Now will help guide you in this pursuit. Each day they provide a scripture passage and wonderfully thought-provoking and spirit-enriching material to read and think about.

Prayer

In the busyness of our everyday lives, prayer can sometimes get squeezed out. Lent is a wonderful time to intentionally work toward finding more time in your life for prayer. You can experiment with different ways to pray during the season, or really delve into a new-to-you way of praying, like centering prayer. Enriching your prayer life is a great way to spend Lent.

Service

Another way to observe a holy Lent is to take on a new way of serving. Throughout the forty days of the season you can adopt a new habit of volunteering in the community, making special financial gifts to service organizations, singing in the choir, or participating in a small group.

Observe a holy Lent

This 40-day journey called Lent is a wonderful opportunity to grow in your faith. Find your path of self-reflection and spiritual discovery, and invite others to join you as you seek to observe a holy Lent.



Men's Group

The SUMC Men will be meeting for supper on Monday, March 16th at 6:30 pm in the Johnson-Shaner Room. Please let Darryl Alford know if you plan to attend.

Scouts Sunday

On Sunday, April 19, our Scouts Troop 463 will be helping with our worship service. They will be greeters at the door and reading the scripture of the day.

RECYCLE
PLASTIC BOTTLES & CANS

We Are Collecting:

- ✓ Plastic Bottles
- ✓ Aluminum Cans
- ✓ Soda Bottles
- ✓ Water Bottles
- ✓ Juice Bottles

Bring your bottles and cans any Sunday from 9:30am to 12:30pm. Drop-off by the stairs, across from the Sunday School rooms. Have questions? Reach out to Sarah for more information.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 5 Betsy Ireland
- 9 David McAllister
- 14 Jayce Jeyapalan
- 20 Shobana Sylvester
- 22 Janet Clifton
- 23 Marjorie Johnson
- 26 Tomasi Panisi
- 27 Russell David Snead
- 31 Stephen Boaz



We would like to celebrate your special days like birthdays and Anniversaries by publishing it in our monthly newsletter. If you would like the same to be published please email it to sunnyvale-umc@comcast.net. We do not mention any age, number of years married, just the name and date.

United Women In Faith

The United Women in Faith will get together on Monday, March 9, at 1:30 p.m. in the Johnson/Shaner Room. Our guest speaker is Nivisha Mehta, Chief Development Officer with Sunnyvale Community Services. She will explain how they are working to provide services to the underserved in Sunnyvale and why the monthly donations made by our UWF members are so important. All women are invited to attend.

Craft workshop: These workshops are a good way to try new projects and maybe find one that you really enjoy doing. You do NOT need to know how to do any special craft. The workshops are held in the Johnson/Shaner rooms from 10 AM until approximately 2 PM, unless cancelled by Tonya Oravetz. Helpful hint: bring lunch or snack if you plan to come and stay for a while.

One Warm Scarf project:

This project is to knit, crochet or weave scarves for people in need. You can google the “name” and find out who started this project and why. The SUMC Youth Group is now responsible for storing finished scarves, scheduling the scarf blessing, sorting and packing the blessed scarves to be delivered to the area coordinator. Please let Jane Dredge know if you are interested in supporting this project by creating scarves but you need some guidance as to how to get started. P.S. Jane works on scarves at the Craft workshop? (janeedredge@gmail.com)

Church and Society

UMCOR Sunday, March 15, 2026

UMCOR Sunday is one of six churchwide Special Sundays designated to support ministries and causes important to the entire United Methodist Church. On March 15 a special offering will be taken to support the United Methodist Committee on Relief—better known as UMCOR—the disaster response and humanitarian relief agency of our church. By covering UMCOR’s administrative costs, this Special Sunday makes sure the Church is equipped to respond whenever and wherever help is needed—without delay.

When people face crisis—whether from natural disaster, conflict, or hunger—UMCOR is there to help. When we support UMCOR Sunday, we’re not just reacting to emergencies. We’re making it possible for the Church to be a consistent, trusted presence in moments of urgent need. Because administrative costs are covered through this offering, UMCOR can respond with transparency and trust. Giving on UMCOR Sunday helps ensure hope is not delayed—and compassion is never compromised.