Christmas is barely packed away yet Lent will soon be upon us. The calendar of the Christian year is like that sometimes, not in sync with our rhythms and expectations. But ready or not, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine’s Day this year. Never mind that Easter is April 1st—April Fool’s Day (no joke!).

Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day seem to have nothing in common. But the fact is—it’s really all about love. God’s love for us and all the ways that love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus our Advent/Christmas theme God So Loves the World segues into our Lenten theme: Love God/Love Creation.

We will draw on Scripture and the worship resources of the season, our United Methodist Bishops’ study God’ s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action, Pope Francis’ Laudato Si’, and our April Book Study Book Love in a Time of Climate Change: Honoring Creation, Establishing Justice by Sharon Delgado.

An old hymn sings: ...dear to God is the earth Christ trod. No place but is holy ground. (From This Is My Father’s World) From Jesus’ Temptation in the wilderness where Lent begins to the Tree of Calvary where he dies, and down into the earth of the tomb from which he will be raised up, Christ’s life and mission hallow the Creation, lament its peril, and celebrate the day of restoration. Let us journey together through Lent 2018 and find ourselves on the other side of the grave with renewed dedication as stewards of the earth.

It’s really all about love. No joke!

What one thing can I do today to love God and love Creation?

WORSHIP SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 4
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Holy Communion
Homily by Rev. Patricia Farris
no simple church today

FEBRUARY 11
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Sermon by Rev. Robert English
5 p.m. simple church
Theme: on transfiguration and being terrified by unconditional love

FEBRUARY 18
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
First Sunday in Lent • Baptism
Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris
5 p.m. simple church
Theme: on finding God in wild places

FEBRUARY 25
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Second Sunday in Lent
Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris
5 p.m. simple church
Theme: on only Jesus’ call is to be faithful and not successful

ASH WEDNESDAY Services
Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent - a time of introspection and self-examination of our lives and relationship with God. The ritual of the ashes represent a visual reminder of the day as we pause to remember our physical limits in contrast to the infinity of God. Here at First UMC, we offer two Ash Wednesday services in the Chapel. The ashes used for the services come from the burned palms of last year’s Palm Sunday Service. We invite you to this intimate and reflective service that marks the beginning of the Lenten season.

Ash Wednesday: February 14 • 12:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m., Chapel

MARCH 25: PALM SUNDAY
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Waving of Palms and Loud Hosannas!
Worship is followed by Easter Egg Hunt and Family Brunch.

MARCH 29: MAUNDY THURSDAY
7:30 p.m. Sanctuary Worship
Communion, Prayer, and Darkness (child care provided)

MARCH 30: GOOD FRIDAY
Chapel open for Prayer 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Labyrinth open for walk 1 p.m. - 9 p.m.
12:00 p.m. Community Service - First Presbyterian Church
1220 2nd St, Santa Monica, CA 90401

MARCH 31: simple church EASTER VIGIL
7:30 p.m. Courtyard/Chapel
An ancient liturgy of Light, Word, and Communion

APRIL 1: EASTER SUNDAY
6:30 a.m. Easter Sunrise Service
Paliades Park (Santa Monica Blvd. & Ocean Ave.)
Bring fresh flowers for the cross, and a lawn chair or blankets.
Hot coffee served.

10 a.m. Easter Celebration Worship
First UMC Sanctuary
Family Service, Choir, Brass, Organ, Lilies, and Alleluias!
(nursery care provided)

HOLY WEEK

On the Website
Check out the Haiti Mission webpage to learn more about the trip, this year’s work team and how you can help support them: www.santamonicaumc.org/haiti
Upward Bound House Home Run for Kids

Registration is now open for the 6th Annual Home Run for Kids Walk/Run in the Brentwood community of West Los Angeles. This year’s event— including a 5k/10k chip-timed course, and a stroller & pet friendly Kiddie K— expects to draw over 1,500 participants with all proceeds benefiting Upward Bound House. This is a great opportunity for kids and parents to work together to solve family homelessness, a continuing crisis across Los Angeles. Join the First UMC Team! Register on the website under “First United Methodist Church.” Before the race, First UMC will hold a brief on-site worship service complete with Communion at 8 a.m. Look for the white First UMC tent. Find out what it means to pray on your feet!

Sunday, February 11: www.homerrunforkids.com

CAST Auditions

Children’s After School Theater is calling all kids! CAST is holding auditions for their Spring production for the 6th-12th graders. Audition materials will be provided there. Show title is to be announced.

Monday, February 12: 5 p.m. Simkins Hall

End of Life Series - Two Part Seminar

Congregation Care Visitor Annette Premer and Rev. Robert English will lead a 2-Part Series open to all. Light refreshments will be served.

PART 1 - Five Wishes

We’ll walk through the Five Wishes - a living will that’s changing the way we talk about and plan for care at the end of life, addressing your medical, personal, emotional and spiritual needs. Seminar includes a video from Aging with Dignity, the national non-profit organization with a mission to affirm and safeguard the human dignity of individuals as they age and to promote better care for those near the end of life. For questions and to RSVP, contact Anne Premer: apremer@santamonicaumc.org.

Sunday, February 11: 11:30 - 12:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room

PART 2 - Funeral/Memorial Planning

Discover the importance of funeral/memorial service planning, and other spiritual considerations when dealing with end of life care. Come for yourself as well as your family - it’s an wonderful gift to yourself and your loved ones. Led by Rev. Robert English.

Sunday, February 18: 11:30 - 12:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room

Loving God with Our Minds

Book Study/Potluck

The featured book for February is Days of Awe and Wonder: How to Be a Christian in the 21st Century by Marcus Borg. Marcus Borg is one of our Book Study group favorites. This is a collection of pivotal interviews, writings, and previously unpublished essays that is both a wonderful introduction to and review of his major themes. This is a powerful read for the weeks of Epiphany leading into Lent. As Borg writes: “God, the sacred, pervades all that is, even though we do not often see it. But there are moments in which our eyes are opened and we see the glory.”

Everyone is welcome. Bring something to share for our potluck lunch. Book may be purchased on Amazon or at the Sunday Hospitality Table. Bring a dish to share.

Sunday, February 25: 11:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room
FEBRUARY Calendar

Rev. Patricia Farris - Côte d’Ivoire
Rev. Patricia will be traveling February 5 -15 to attend a meeting of the UM Committee on Faith and Order which will be held in Côte d’Ivoire. The Committee is working on a draft of a new UM Book of Discipline for the global UMGC, as we move from being a US-centered denomination to a truly global church. Please keep her in your prayers.

Mid-Week Recital for February

Take a break from your day and spend your lunch hour listening to beautiful music! The February recital features Althea Waites, piano. Internationally acclaimed American Pianist, Althea has concertized extensively throughout the United States, Europe and Asia as a brilliant soloist, chamber music and collaborative artist. She is currently on the keyboard faculty at California State University/Long Beach, and organist/pianist at Rolling Hills United Methodist Church. See the complete list of musicians for this year’s recitals:


FREE Concert Wednesday, February 7: 12:10 - 12:40 p.m., Sanctuary. Schedule change due to Ash Wednesday.

Reception follows to meet the artist in the Fireside Room.

Mid-Week Recital for February

February Messy Church
Messy Church is a great opportunity for families to be together in worship without the worry of being too silly or “messy” because, ‘let’s face it, life can be messy!’

At Messy Church, we grow in our relationship with God and with one another through crafts, activities, music, and stories of God’s love. Then, together we enjoy a shared meal. Children and adults of all ages are welcome to invite their friends and family, your neighbors and school friends to this new church community. Be ready to get messy!

February Theme: Love God.

For more info or to sign up for the email list, go to: www.santamonicaumc.org/messychurch.

Upward Bound House Home Run for Kids
Registration is now open for the 6th Annual Home Run for Kids Walk/Run in the Brentwood community of West Los Angeles. This year’s event— including a 5k/10k chip-timed course, and a stroll & fun pet-friendly Kiddie K- expects to draw over 1,500 participants with all proceeds benefiting Upward Bound House. This is a great opportunity for kids and parents to work together to solve family homelessness, a continuing crisis across Los Angeles. Join the First UMC Team! Register on the website under “First United Methodist Church.” Registration for the race, First UMC will hold a brief on-site worship service complete with Communion at 8 a.m. Look for the white First UMC tent. Find out what it means to pray on your feet!

Sunday, February 11: 5:30 p.m., Simkins Hall

Aging with Dignity: Five Wishes & Memorial Planning
Congregation Care Visitor Anne Premer and Rev. Robert English will lead a 2-Part Series open to all. Light refreshments will be served and No Charge.

PART 1 - Five Wishes
We’ll explore the Five Wishes - a living will that’s changing the way we talk about and plan for the end of life, addressing your medical, personal, emotional and spiritual needs. Seminar includes a video from Aging with Dignity, the national non-profit organization that promotes the mission of affirm and safeguard the human dignity of individuals as they age and to promote better care for those near the end of life. The life and work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta served as the inspirational foundation of Aging with Dignity. Led by Anne Premer.

Sunday, February 11: 11:30 - 12:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room

PART 2 - Funeral/Memorial Planning
Discover the importance of funeral/memorial service planning, and other spiritual considerations when dealing with end of life care. Grazing your journey as well as your family - it’s a wonderful gift to yourself and your loved ones. Led by Rev. Robert English.

Sunday, February 18: 11:30 - 12:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room

For questions and to RSVP for both events, contact Anne Premer: a.premer@santamonicaumc.org.

Loving God with Our Minds

The featured book for February is Days of Awe and Wonder: How to Be a Christian in the 21st Century by Marcus Borg.

Marcus Borg is one of our Book Study group favorites. This is a collection of pivotal writings, interviews, and previously unpublished essays that is both a wonderful introduction to and review of his major themes. This is a powerful read for the weeks of Epiphany leading into Lent. As Borg writes: “God, the sacred, pervades all that is, even though we do not often see it. But there are moments in which our eyes are opened and we see the glory.”

Everyone is welcome. Bring something to share for our potluck lunch. Book may be purchased on Amazon or at the Sunday Hospitality Table. Bring a dish to share.

Sunday, February 25: 11:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room

West District Training Conference
The West District Training Conference is for both current and emerging leaders within local UMC churches. This day of practical ministry training includes a time of praise and worship as well as numerous workshops by leaders throughout the West District and California-Pacific Conference. Come expecting to meet new friends and connect with people across our district!

Go to: www.westdistricttraining.com for more information.

Saturday, February 3: 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Holman United Methodist Church (3320 W Adams Blvd. LA)
Haiti 2018

Every year since the devastating 7.0 earthquake in 2010 near Port-au-Prince, First UMC of Santa Monica has sent a work team to live and serve in the country of Haiti.

In collaboration with Haitian Methodist partners, our efforts thus far have made tangible progress in rebuilding churches, clinics, schools and homes. We believe that our biggest impact in the rebuild effort in Haiti, however, is in giving hope and building relationships with our fellow Haitian brothers and sisters in Christ.

This year’s First UMC team: Charity Goldberg, Glenda Martinez, Grace Cho, John Pfister, Katie Goldstein, Mahetzi Hernandez, Michael Olsson, Sherry Erlandson, and Todd Erlandson. The team will be commissioned during worship Sunday, February 11, and the trip takes place February 15-25.

We need your support!

Each team member covers their own travel expenses; therefore, 100% of all donations raised will make a direct impact on Haiti such as:

• Purchasing site building materials
• Employing Haitian laborers
• Employing Haitian translators, drivers, guesthouse cook and staff - 3 Haitian people are employed for every 1 volunteer sent!

Ways to Give

• Give online www.santamonicaumc.org/haiti or send checks by mail to First UMC Santa Monica, 1008 11th St. Santa Monica, CA 90403. Memo: Haiti Work Team
• Bring your loose change (or cash) to church on Sundays February 4, and February 11, and place them in the Pennies for Haiti buckets in church or during Cuppa Hour in the hall.
• Donations are 100% tax-deductible.

Stories of Grace

The team will host a Report Back Luncheon on March 4, 11 a.m. in Simkins Hall. All are welcome to hear team members share their experiences in Haiti. Lunch will be served.

www.santamonicaumc.org/haiti.

Prayer for Haiti

- Let us pray daily for our team and for the people of Haiti.

Most Holy Creator God, Lord of heaven and earth, we bring before you today your people of Haiti. It is You who set in motion the stars and seas, You who raised up the mountains of the Massif de la Hotte and Pic La Selle. It is You who made her people in your very image: their gregarious hearts and generous spirits, their hunger and thirst for righteousness and liberty. Your people, O Lord, cry out to you.

Haiti, O Haiti: The world’s first black-led republic, the second-oldest republic in the Western world.

God, You are the One who answers the cries of the suffering. You are a God who sees, frees, and redeems your people.

“I too have heard the moaning of my people,” you spoke to Moses. Raise up your people and give them strong hearts and hands, shore up their minds and spirits.

As for us, Lord, we who are far but who hold them close in our hearts, imbue us with the strength of Simon the Cyrene. Help us to carry the Haitian cross. Show us how to lighten their yoke with our prayers, our aid, our resources. Teach us to work harder for justice in our own country and dignity in Haiti, so that we may stand with integrity when we hold our Haitian families in our arms once again.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Case of Emergency....

Are you prepared for an emergency? Recent disasters around the world have focused our attention on what we need to know should a calamity strike our beloved church or a member of the congregation. Do we know who to contact on your behalf, if you are unable to speak for yourself?

Please take a few moments to fill out an Emergency Contact Form, available at the Sunday Hospitality Table every Sunday morning. We are requesting two contacts other than your spouse. If you’ve done this in the past, please fill out a new form so we can update your file.

If you are interested or would like to learn more, email Team Leader, Tricia Guerrero: t.guerrero@santamonicaumc.org or call the church office. Visit the website: www.santamonicaumc.org/disaster-response.

Happenings at First UMC

Preschool Corner

Monthly Value: February - Love

PRESCHOOL EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY
February 7: (weather dependent) Candlelight Service
February 9: Installation of 2018 Lay Leadership
February 10: Lunar New Year Celebration, 9 -10 a.m.
February 11: Installation of 2018 Lay Leadership
February 15: Candlelight Service
February 16: Lessons & Carols
February 19: Presidents Day (school closed)
February 20: Parents Night Out - Let’s ‘Let’s Speak it Out’ (French conversation)
February 20: Preschool Drop-in - Come and Play!
February 21: Lunar New Year Celebration, 9-10 a.m.
February 24: Presidents Day (school closed)
February 24: Presidents Day (school closed)
February 25: Presidents Day (school closed)
February 26: Presidents Day (school closed)
February 27: Presidents Day (school closed)
February 28: Presidents Day (school closed)

As part of Health and Wellness week at the Preschool, the kids ran in a Jog-A-Thon in Simkins Hall.

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Did you know that there are 27 African-American spirituals in The United Methodist Hymnal, and that there are 13 in The Faith We Sing? Many African-American spirituals are familiar to us, as we have sung them in school, church and Sunday school and have listened as they were sung by famous musicians. Sometimes one inexplicably keeps repeating itself over and over in our minds as we go about our daily routines. They are melodic, rhythmic and each one tells a story, a story that we once heard in Sunday school or one that came to us from the Bible, or, in some cases, one with hidden meaning.

These spirituals go back to a rather dark time in American history, a time during which several hundred thousand human beings were captured in their native Africa, separated from their family members, crammed into the bowels of sailing ships and forced to suffer long sea voyages terminating in the United States where they were sold as slaves. They were forced to live under poor conditions, work long hours, receive no wages and were subjected to cruel treatment if they failed to please their owners or attempted to escape. Forbidden to pursue their own religious beliefs, they were exposed to Christianity in the hopes of their owners that by following the teachings of the Bible, they would be less likely to attempt escape. Many of the slaves accepted these Christian teachings and expressed them in styles and rhythms that followed the teachings of the Bible, or, in some cases, one with hidden meaning. Some, such as Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen (UMH #520) tell of the misery of lives torn from native homes only to be spent in slavery. Others, e.g. My Lord What a Morning (UMH #717) and I’m Going Home When the Spirit Says Sing (UMH #333) express joy and hope for a better life, and All Of God’s Chillun Got Shoes tells of the hope that shoes, which in many cases slaves didn’t have, would be available in Heaven (or freedom) as well as robes and harps.

In lamenting that the people of Israel were rejecting the word of God, the prophet Jeremiah referred to a resinsolvent substance found in Gilead that was rubbed into wounds to promote healing and asked, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” As the African slaves were exposed to and began to accept the teachings of Christianity, they saw Jesus as the answer to Jeremiah’s question, and they sing, There Is A Balm in Gilead.

In addition to Christian lessons, some of these songs are believed to have hidden messages. The words of Swing Low, Sweet Chariot (UMH #703) are believed to refer to escape to freedom, or not escape, freedom from the miseries of slavery through death and Heaven. “A band of angels comin’ after me, comin’ for to carry me home” in which the word home may refer to freedom or Heaven; “If you get there before I do ... tell all my friends I’m comin’ too.” Other songs that are believed to have encouraged escape attempts are Go Down Moses (UMH #448) and Steal Away to Jesus (UMH #704). Wade in the Water (TFWS #2107) was sung as a reminder that when attempting an escape, one should walk in water so that the dogs that were used to track fleeing slaves would not be able to follow the scent of the escapees.

Today as we listen to these songs or, better yet as we sing them ourselves, we can learn from the stories they tell, we can enjoy their rich melodies and rhythms, we can be thankful for the progress and understanding that has evolved, and we can anticipate enlightenment yet to come as we celebrate the music and culture of African-American History.

But African-American spirituals express more than Christian messages. Some, such as Go Down Moses (aka Elkpen) are Los Angeles-based artist looking for novel ways to talk about nature to a wide audience. Employing context and site specificity, her premise is that seeing things in unexpected ways helps deepen a viewer’s connection to content and hopefully build bridges to conservation values. She creates messages about natural history stories using the shorthand of pictographs, graphic lettering arrangements, and humor in formats that range from matchbooks to street art to large scale wall drawings. Her work has been shown and installed in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Florida, Canada and Mexico. Visit: www.santamonicaumc.org/Elkpen.html

Elkpen opens Sunday, February 18, after worship in the Fireside Room. How to Keep a Holy Lent: Beginners Guide

“Dear fellow traveler on the journey of faith, let’s begin our Lenten journey today. As we keep this season holy, let us take time to reflect on the meaning of Love God/Love Creation?”

Lenten Devotions
The First UMC Lenten Devotional, written by members of the congregation, will be available for pick up beginning Ash Wednesday in the Chapel or in the church office. You may also sign up online to receive the daily devotional by email: www.santamonicaumc.org/lent.

How to Keep a Holy Lent: Beginners Guide

Look for a pocket-sized Lenten guide called How to Keep a Holy Lent: Beginners Guide, available beginning Ash Wednesday and throughout Lent. Each day includes a suggested tip for observing Lent. Some examples include: Day 8: No complaining day. Day 22: Tell someone what you are grateful for. Day 42: Read Psalm 121. The Guide will be available in the narthex, at the Sunday Hospitality Table, and in the church office.

Place of Prayer: A Lenten Photo Journal

O, let the place of secret prayer become to me the most beloved spot on earth. – Olaus Petri

During Lent, take a photo of your place of prayer. We would love to share it on the church social media. Send images to photo@santamonica.org. On Instagram During Lent, use your smartphone and take a photo of your place of prayer. We would love to share it on the church social media. Send images to photo@santamonica.org.

Art in the Fireside Room
First UMC is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibit in the Fireside Room will feature artist Christian Kasperkovitz (aka Elkpen).

First UMC member Berneice Southcott’s sister-in-law, Arlene, died January 25. First UMC member Margaret Gazeys’ mother, Alice Coombs, died January 25. First UMC member Maile Marquand’s mother, Loris, died January 23. Former First UMC member Donald Budget died on September 1, 2017.

Thank You for the Prayers
"To my church family, the staff and Congregation alike. Leticia and I would like to thank you for the heartfelt prayers for her husband Jarman Thomas. He is improving so much with those miracle prayers that he is closer to being released from the hospital and getting to go back home. I would also like to thank the Prayer Quilt Ministry for the beautiful quilt that was made. Leticia told me that his eyes lit up when he saw it, and wanted it right away. She is telling everyone what a wonderful church I have and about the Prayer Ministry. Thank you and God Bless You All."”

Thank You to Angel Tree Donors
“As I conclude another year as chairman of Angel Tree, benefitting our own Upward Bound House Family Place, it gives me great pleasure to realize that over 50 families participated in our annual project. Take a moment to look at the photo of the completed Angel Tree baskets, and then congratulate yourselves for your part in this year’s successful Angel Tree Project. Each year makes the project just a little more gratifying to me as I hope it does for you. We turned over 26 complete laundry baskets full of new household items: sheets, blankets, towels, bathroom rugs, and first aid kits. Twenty-one, as usual, went to the residents of the 21 apartments, and 5 were for much appreciated help, and the Quilt committee for again sharing their space with us. A deep note of personal gratitude is sent your way thanking you for generosity. I hope that the love and concern you have shown the residents at Family Place has imbued you with the true meaning of Christmas. It truly is more blessed to give than to receive. Thank you and have a blessed 2018!"

First UMC Community Deaths
• Long-time First UMC and UWM member, Elizabeth Kling, died peacefully in her sleep the night of January 16th with family at her side. We give thanks to God for her long and beautiful life. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, February 17, 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel, followed by a cake reception in the Fireside Room.

• First UMC member Berneice Southcott’s sister-in-law, Arlene, died January 25.

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• First UMC member Maile Marquand’s mother, Loris, died January 23.

• Former First UMC member Donald Budget died on September 1, 2017.

Congratulations
• First UMC member Perry Guerero and Yumi Nakatani were married in Japan on January 5, 2018.

Special Announcements
• Photo of the Angel Tree baskets may be found in this week’s bulletin.

• Explore the latest Exhibit at the Fireside Room beginning Ash Wednesday. The show opens with artist Christian Kasperkovitz (aka Elkpen).

• The Angel Tree Project sends a thank you note to the Prayer Quilt Ministry for their beautiful quilt. We realize they are made and made in a spirit of love and caring. Angel Tree Project invites all to a cake reception in the Fireside Room following the exhibit opening.

• Art in the Fireside Room opens this Sunday. First UMC is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibit in the Fireside Room will feature artist Christian Kasperkovitz (aka Elkpen).

• The United Methodist Hymnal includes over 26 complete laundry baskets full of new household items: sheets, blankets, towels, bathroom rugs, and first aid kits. Twenty-one, as usual, went to the residents of the 21 apartments, and 5 were for much appreciated help, and the Quilt committee for again sharing their space with us. A deep note of personal gratitude is sent your way thanking you for generosity. The love and concern you have shown the residents at Family Place has imbued you with the true meaning of Christmas. It truly is more blessed to give than to receive. Thank you and have a blessed 2018!”

• Look for the board on the first Sunday of Lent, February 18.

• A Holy Lent: Beginners Guide, written by members of the congregation, will be available for pick up beginning Ash Wednesday in the Chapel or in the church office. You may also sign up online to receive the daily devotional by email: www.santamonicaumc.org/lent.

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African American Spirituals

By Jack Fry, First UMC Church Member

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Forbidden to pursue their own religious beliefs, they were exposed to Christianity in the hopes of their owners that by following the teachings of the Bible, they would be less likely to attempt escape. Many of the slaves accepted these Christian teachings and expressed them in styles and rhythms that were familiar to them from their African heritage. Often the spirituals followed a format that reflected an African tradition of responses to a leader's sung phrases, e.g. (“Go Down Moses” and several others as well as “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” - UMH #333) express joy and hope for a better life, and, if not escape, freedom from the miseries of slavery through death and Heaven. “A band of angels comin’ after me, comin’ for to carry me home” in which the word home may refer to freedom or Heaven. “If you get there before I do ... tell all my friends I’m comin’ too.” Other songs that are believed to have encouraged escape attempts are Go Down Moses (UMH #344) and Steal Away to Jesus (UMH #704). Wade in the Water (TFWS #2107) was sung as a reminder that when attempting an escape, one should “walk in water so that the dogs that were used to track fleeing slaves would not be able to follow the scent of the escapees.”

Today as we listen to these songs or, better yet as we sing them ourselves, we can learn from the stories they tell, we can enjoy their rich melodies and rhythms, we can be thankful for the progress and understanding that has evolved, and we can anticipate enlightenment yet to come as we celebrate the music and culture of African-American History.

But African-American spirituals express more than Christian messages. Some, such as “Nabobs Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” (UMH #520) tell of the misery of lives torn from native homes only to be spent in slavery. Others, e.g. My Lord What a Manrin’ (UMH #717) and I’m Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing (UMH #333) express joy and hope for a better life, and All Of God’s Children Got Shoes tells of the hope that shoes, which in many cases slaves didn’t have, would be available in Heaven (or freedom) as well as robes and harps.

In lamenting that the people of Israel were rejecting the word of God, the prophet Jeremiah referred to a resinous substance found in Gilead that was molded into wards to promote healing and asked, “is there no balm in Gilead?” As the African slaves were exposed to and began to accept the teachings of Christianity, they saw Jesus as the answer to Jeremiah’s question, and they sang, There Is A Balm in Gilead.

In addition to Christian lessons, some of these songs are believed to have hidden messages. The words of Swing Low, Sweet Chariot (UMH #703) are believed to refer to escape to freedom, or if not escape, freedom from the miseries of slavery through death and Heaven. “A band of angels comin’ after me, comin’ for to carry me home” in which the word home may refer to freedom or Heaven. “If you get there before I do ... tell all my friends I’m comin’ too.” Other songs that are believed to have encouraged escape attempts are Go Down Moses (UMH #344) and Steal Away to Jesus (UMH #704). Wade in the Water (TFWS #2107) was sung as a reminder that when attempting an escape, one should “walk in water so that the dogs that were used to track fleeing slaves would not be able to follow the scent of the escapees.”

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Prayer for Haiti

- Let us pray daily for our team and for the people of Haiti.

Most Holy Creator God, Lord of heaven and earth, we bring before you today your people of Haiti.
It is You who set in motion the stars and seas, You who raised up the mountains of the Massif de la Hotte and Pic La Selle. It is You who made her people in your very image: their gregarious hearts and generous spirits, their hunger and thirst for righteousness and liberty. Your people, O Lord, cry out to you.

Haiti, O Haiti. The world’s first black-led republic, the second-oldest republic in the Western world.

God, You are the One who answers the cries of the suffering. You are a God who sees, frees, and redeems your people.

“I too have heard the moaning of my people,” you spoke to Moses. Raise up your people and give them strong hearts and hands, shore up their minds and spirits.

As for us, Lord, we who are far but who hold them close in our hearts, imbue us with the strength of Simon the Cyrene. Help us to carry the Haitian cross. Show us how to lighten their yoke with our prayers, our aid, our resources. Teach us to work harder for justice in our own country and dignity in Haiti, so that we may stand with integrity when we hold our Haitian families in our arms once again.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Case of Emergency....

Are you prepared for an emergency? Recent disasters around the world have focused our attention on what we need to know should a calamity strike our beloved church or a member of the congregation. Do we know who to contact on your behalf, if you are unable to speak for yourself?

In Case of Emergency... Let us pray daily for our team and for the people of Haiti.

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Christmas is barely packed away yet Lent will soon be upon us. The calendar of the Christian year is like that sometimes, not in sync with our rhythms and expectations. But ready or not, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine’s Day this year. Never mind that Easter is April 1st—April Fool’s Day (no joke!) Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day seem to have nothing in common. But the fact is—it’s really all about love. God’s love for us and all the ways that love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus our Advent/Christmas theme God So Loves the World segues into our Lenten theme: Love God/Love Creation.

We will draw on Scripture and the worship resources of the season, our United Methodist Bishops’ study God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action, Pope Francis’ Laudato Si, and our April Book Study Book Love in a Time of Climate Change: Honoring Creation, Establishing Justice by Sharon Delgado.

An old hymn sings: ‘...dear to God is the earth Christ trod. No place but is holy ground. (From This Is My Father’s World) From Jesus’ Temptation in the wilderness where Lent begins to the Tree of Calvary where he dies, and down into the earth of the tomb from which he will be raised up, Christ’s life and mission hallow the Creation, lament its peril, and celebrate the day of restoration. Let us journey together through Lent 2018 and find ourselves on the other side of the grave with renewed dedication as stewards of the earth. It’s really all about love. No joke!

Senior Minister

What one thing can I do today to love God and love Creation?

WORSHIP SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 4
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Holy Communion
Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris
no simple church today

FEBRUARY 11
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Sermon by Rev. Robert English
5 p.m. simple church
Theme: on finding God in wild places

FEBRUARY 18
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
First Sunday in Lent • Baptism
Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris
5 p.m. simple church
Theme: on being transformed by unconditional love

FEBRUARY 25
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Second Sunday in Lent
Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris
5 p.m. simple church
Theme: on only Jesus’ call is to be faithful and not successful

ASH WEDNESDAY
Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent - a time of introspection and self-examination of our lives and relationship with God. The ritual of the ashes represent a visual reminder of the day as we pause to remember our physical limits in contrast to the infinity of God. Here at First UMC, we offer two Ash Wednesday services in the Chapel. The ashes used for the services come from the burned palms of last year’s Palm Sunday Service. We invite you to this intimate and reflective service that marks the beginning of the Lenten season.

Ash Wednesday: February 14 • 12:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m., Chapel

Holy Week

MARCH 25: PALM SUNDAY
10 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
Weaving of Palms and Litanies in Processional
Sermon by Rev. Robert English
5 p.m. simple church
Theme: on God’s mercy and our corporal calls

MARCH 29: MAUNDY THURSDAY
7:30 p.m. Sanctuary Worship
Communion, Prayer, and Darkness (child care provided)

MARCH 30: GOOD FRIDAY
Chapel open for Prayer: 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Labyrinth open for walk 1 p.m. - 9 p.m.
12:30 p.m. Community Service - First Presbyterian Church 1220 2nd St, Santa Monica, CA 90401

MARCH 31: simple church EASTER VIGIL
7:30 p.m. Courtyard/Chapel
An ancient history of Light, Word, and Communion

APRIL 1: EASTER SUNDAY
6:30 a.m. Easter Sunrise Service
Palisades Park (Santa Monica Blvd. & Ocean Ave.)
Bring fresh flowers for the cross, and a lawn chair or blankets. Hot coffee served.

10 a.m. Easter Celebration Worship
First UMC Sanctuary
Family Service, Choir, Brass, Organ, Lilies, and Alleluia! (nursery care provided)