

[Prayer Ventures for January 2021]

**1** Give thanks and praise that God knows intimately our complexities, failures, accomplishments, questions, goals and hopes, and still looks upon us with loving kindness, newness and a desire for us to thrive as individuals and communities.

**2** Pray for our companion churches and international leaders as they confront multiple waves of the pandemic. Ask the Spirit to fill them with hope, resilience and reassurance that our faith in the presence and love of God, which we share as siblings in Christ, will unify us in caring for one another and in doing God's work in the world, using our diverse gifts, cultures, languages, resources and perspectives in every circumstance.

**3** Give thanks and praise to God that we are children of God, knowing and testifying to the good news that Jesus Christ became flesh and lived among us, and that we have seen the glory of God's only son, full of grace and truth for the world.

**4** *National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month* We remember and pray for victims of sex trafficking, involuntary servitude, debt bondage and forced labor in our nation and around the world, and we ask God's guidance in caring for victims and actively working to end this abuse, injustice and oppression.

**5** Pray for Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, members of the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops. Give thanks for their humble service, their faith in Christ, their leadership and gifts, and their commitment to wrestle with difficult decisions and issues for the sake of the church and the world.

**6** *Epiphany* As people of faith, we are not immune from wondering about God, Jesus Christ and the Spirit. Pray that God will be patient with us, illuminating the truth of who we are as baptized children of God and the reality and certainty of the good news of Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, our Savior, Messiah, Redeemer and teacher.

**7** As the pandemic continues, pray for doctors, nurses, emergency responders and health care workers who need renewal, strength and our gratitude and recognition as they continue to serve at great personal risk and sacrifice for the sake of our health and well-being.

**8** Give thanks for the people in our lives who inspire hope, faith and courage, and whose words and actions touch us, teach us the meaning of grace and move us to become bearers of mercy in the world.

**9** In Christ we have received forgiveness of our sins and salvation through God's unfathomable grace, showered upon us every day. Praise God!

**10** Give thanks for God's love and forgiveness in baptism, which marks the beginning of our journey with our siblings in Christ to share the good news, serve all people, grow the church and strive for peace and justice in the world.

**11** Pray for parents, students, employees and business owners whose plans and routines change day by day and week by week due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, that they might be hopeful, resilient and able to adapt, change and endure.

**12** Pray for our faith-based schools, early childhood education programs and day care centers as they provide experiential education, social interaction, stability and calm for the youngest of our children, who are often most vulnerable during times of uncertainty and anxiety.

**13** God is mighty, majestic and eternal throughout the universe, generously sharing strength and blessings with us. Give glory and thanks to God, and shout for joy!

**14** Ask God to help us practice justice, generosity and care for creation, sharing our resources with others who have few or who have lost resources or productive land as a result of natural and human-caused disasters.

**15** Pray for the young adults who have applied for a yearlong journey in international service with our companion churches and organizations through the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program, which will resume in 2021-2022 after a time of sabbath during the pandemic.

**16** Thank God for our special relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1997; pray for the church, its members and its leaders, and pray that together we will find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor, especially in these uncertain and challenging times.

**17** Jesus invited Philip to follow him as a disciple, and Philip, in turn, invited Nathanael. Ask God to help us be faithful followers, students and, at the same time, disciples eager to invite others to join in God's good work in the world.

**18** *Martin Luther King Day* Today we remember the life, ministry, sacrifice and activism of Martin Luther King Jr. Pray that his life and the legacies of others who have fought for civil rights and social reform will inspire our own commitment and persistence in working for racial justice, dismantling racism and combating white supremacy.

**19** We may argue about what is legal, what we are entitled to or what we have the right to do with our bodies and lives. But Paul reminds us that we have been made one with the body and spirit of Christ; we "were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." Pray that the Spirit will guide us to live with humility and deference for who we are in Christ and in obedience to the ways and desires of God.

**20** *Inauguration Day* As members of society and the church who represent varied political affiliations and perspectives, pray together for our nation's newly elected president and vice president, that the Spirit will grant them wisdom, strength, commitment to serving all people, a deep understanding of justice and mercy, and the courage to enact change for the well-being of our communities and nation.

**21** Pray for the ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering, an online event happening right now that gathers ELCA World Hunger leaders for learning, networking, sharing ideas and planning for our common ministry to address hunger and its root causes.

**22** Pray for reconciliation, understanding and renewal in our divided nation so that we might work together for justice, compassion and generosity, serving our neighbors in need and the well-being of our communities as they struggle with vexing, deep-rooted problems. Ask the Spirit to inspire and guide our lives so that our values, decisions, actions and words reflect the gospel, the teachings of Jesus and the ways of God, who is good, gracious, merciful and just.

**23** Praise God that, as small and insignificant as we might be in the vast universe, we are wonderfully made and God knows every little thing about us and our human ways.

**24** In Scripture we read about Jesus' simple, personal and compelling invitations to Simon, Andrew, James, John and the other disciples to drop everything and follow him. Pray that when God calls us to follow and serve, we will respond with faith and trust, even if we do not yet know where God is leading us or what God is calling us to do.

**25** Pray for ministries, nonprofit organizations and agencies that serve the daily needs of communities, families and individuals; pursue justice and equity; build resilience to cope with disasters and crises; accompany immigrants and refugees; and bring the hope and love of Christ where there is despair and weariness.

**26** When, like Jonah, we are reluctant to forgive, practice mercy or share the gospel with those we deem undeserving, ask the Spirit to help us discern God's ways, grace and mercy for all people, and to act boldly without personal bias.

**27** *Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith* Praise God for the witness and ministry of women of the early church. Give thanks for women of all ages and backgrounds who, responding to God's call, continue to use their gifts, life experiences, knowledge and passions to grow the church, serve all people and be bearers of hope and healing in the world.

**28** Give thanks for the Lutheran liturgy and worship practices that equip us for daily life, helping us to praise God, listen to God's word and experience unity in the body of Christ.

**29** Give thanks for the self-sacrificing generosity of people who demonstrate their gratefulness for God's gift of life and their concern for their neighbors' well-being by donating blood, plasma and even organs.

**30** Remember in prayer those who continue to struggle with unemployment, underemployment and job searching as a result of the economic and health impacts of COVID-19.

**31** Though our creeds do not speak of Jesus' teachings, miracles or example, give thanks that, through Scripture, the Spirit reveals Jesus to be the source of our redemption and a trustworthy guide, instructing us how to live with one another, serve our neighbor and do God's work in the world today.

