

[Prayer Ventures for February 2024]

1 Pray for synod hunger team chairs and other key ELCA World Hunger leaders participating in the ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering in Houston. Ask the Spirit to guide their work of energizing congregations and synods to end hunger and poverty in the world, bringing relief and hope to our neighbors.

2 Remember in prayer those who suffer from heart disease, heart failure and congenital heart defects. Pray for the doctors, nurses, surgeons, care providers, researchers and chaplains who provide treatment, care and encouragement to patients of all ages and their families.

3 Pray for your synod's leaders, congregations and special ministries. Ask the Spirit to sustain them and stir their creative wisdom in carrying out the mission of the church in a changing and challenging world.

4 Give thanks for Jesus, our Savior, who changed the world not by force or coercion but by demonstrating God's lifesaving love, mercy, care for those who suffer and welcome for those who are excluded. Pray that the example of Jesus and the word of God will guide us in living for one another and sharing the gospel.

5 Pray for peace, healing and justice in places of conflict and violence, especially Ukraine, the Holy Land, Myanmar, Haiti, Venezuela and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

6 "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary" (Isaiah 40:28). Who better to have at our side during every twist and turn in life than God, who is mighty, merciful and concerned for our well-being? Give praise and thanks to God!

7 Remember in prayer our neighbors and siblings in Christ who experience domestic abuse — physical, sexual or emotional. Pray that they will find refuge, community support and care for their injury and trauma. Give thanks for the work of ELCA Justice for Women, Women of the ELCA and community organizations that serve victims and survivors of domestic violence.

8 Praise God for the 50th anniversary of ELCA World Hunger and the ways God continues to use our collective assets to impact the world and serve our neighbors in need.

9 Promise to follow in the footsteps of Paul, who was mindful of the responsibility God had entrusted him with to share the gospel with people of various cultures, beliefs and life circumstances.

10 Pray that the Spirit will strengthen and sustain Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, stir her wisdom and renew her vision for our church and its mission.

11 Like Jesus' disciples, we are often confused, fearful and full of questions, longing to understand what God is doing through Jesus and what we must do as followers. Pray for God's patience as our faith matures and we learn how to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

12 Give thanks for our global companions whose daily realities, faith traditions, culture and language may differ from ours yet complement and enrich our lives and faith.

13 Pray that everything we do and say as people of faith will light the world, direct attention to our Creator and reflect God's love for humanity and all creation.

14 *Ash Wednesday* "Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them" (Matthew 6:1). Reflect on who we are to God — fragile, imperfect beings *and* loved children who stand before God with humility and gratitude.

15 Joy and sorrow are both intrinsic to being human. Pray that we might feel each of them as deeply, in the world and in our lives.

16 Pray that, during Lent, we will lean into God's grace and mercy with humility, trusting the promise that the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ win us a place in the kingdom of God.

17 Pray that, as bold disciples of Christ, we will be unashamed of our faith, confident in God's promises, comfortable telling our faith story and quick to respect and serve those in need.

18 "God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth'" (Genesis 9:12-13). Give thanks and praise to God for this promise of love and forgiveness.

19 *Martin Luther, renewer of the church (1483-1546)* Give thanks that we continue to learn from and be inspired by the sermons, hymns and writings of Martin Luther, who studied and wrestled with Scripture and the church to better understand God's saving grace and how it impacts every aspect of daily life.

20 Ask God to bless the work of the ELCA Organizing for Mission Network, a community of leaders and resource providers who use the principles of community organizing to develop, redevelop and renew gospel-centered communities that act for the sake of the world and the well-being of our neighbor.

21 The cross has become widespread in art, jewelry, clothing and popular culture around the world. Reflect on the symbol and the true meaning of the cross for those who find salvation and identity in Christ.

22 Remember in prayer those who helped you become the child of God you are today — siblings in Christ, parents and family, church leaders, teachers, friends, strangers, mentors and influential people who have gone before us.

23 Promise to learn God's ways and truth and to integrate them into your daily life, that we might operate from a firm foundation of love, wisdom and justice when struggling to discern right from wrong and to relate to one another.

24 Pray for the work of the ELCA Peace Not Walls campaign, which seeks a just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and connects ELCA members with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, the Lutheran World Federation and ecumenical companions across the Middle East.

25 Do you know someone celebrating a momentous occasion — a birth, an anniversary, recovery from illness or injury? Let their joy be your joy, and lift up prayers of thanksgiving to God.

26 Pray that we will not grow weary of serving our neighbors in need, both nearby and around the world. Ask the Spirit to renew us when we feel overwhelmed by human needs.

27 Remember in prayer the bishops of our church gathering for the Conference of Bishops in Itasca, Ill. Give thanks for their faith, gifts, wisdom and diverse perspectives, which God uses to benefit the church and help us do God's work in the world.

28 "In my trials, Lord, walk with me; when my heart is almost breaking, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me" (*ELW* 325). Lent reminds us of our frailty, suffering and loneliness and of God's love and forgiveness, found in the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Breathe a sigh of relief and thank God.

29 Be mindful of those in your community who lack safe shelter and adequate food. Pray that their needs will be met, and that God will use you and your congregation to meet them.